State Government offices and courts are located in Madurai North only. A special care and attention should be given to this matter. The Central and the State Governments are boasting with each other that the flood relief works are on war-footing. I would like to know what is the amount sanctioned to the telephone department in order to replace the worn-out and damaged cables in view of recent flood.

The capacity of the EIOB Ellis Nagar Electronic Exchange is 50,000 lines. So far only 2,100 lines are connected with this EIOB. The whole of Madurai City can be connected with this and almost all waiting listed subscribers can also be satisfied. But for want of some materials and cables the work is proceeding at a snail's speed. The actual capacity of the exchange is under-utilised for reasons known to the department only. I fail to understand the reasons as to why the department is reluctant and lazy.

I am given to understand that there are no adequate qualified engineers in the EIOB electronic exchange. Only two or three Assistant Engineers are there. Whenever they find any fault on this electronic exchange, they have to contact over Trichy or Bombay and thereby they rectify the defects. Why don't they post sufficiently qualified engineers for Madurai. Why is the Government of India showing a step-motherly treatment for Madurai ?

I have to say somthing about the telex system at Madurai. At present the telex exchange at Madurai is of electromechanical type. The services are not as good when compared to that of electronic telex exchanges working elsewhere in the country. Electronic telex exchanges of higher capacity may also be allotted to Madurai in order to improve the telex service.

In order to provide Panchayat telephones with a higher capacity, multi access radio relay system may also be allotted.

I have to make a mention about the Advisory Committee of the Telephones. Nowadays, the Telephone Advisory Committee has become Congress-oriented. In the name of social workers, six Congress workers have been appointed as Advisory Committee members for Madurai Telephones. The Member representing the doctors and the member representing advocates are also from the Congress Party only. With a view to facilitate the domination ofthe ruling party, vacancies for Chamber of Commerce and press reporters are kept vacant for a pretty long time.

As the number of PCOs are increasing nowadays and there are about 750 PCOs at Madurai only which are patronised daily by about 25,000 subscribers, the Government should consider the request of the PCO|STD Owners' Association to nominate a member from their side on the Telephone Advisory Committee. This is a good suggestion which the Department of Communications can fulfil.

I conclude, Madam. Thank you.

THE PRESS COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1992

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO) : Madam Vice-Chairperson, I move :

That the Bill further to amend the Press Council Act, 1978, be taken into consideration.

Madam, I would like to apprise Hon'ble Members the reasons for taking up such an amendment bill. According to Section 5 of the Act relating to composition of the Council, it shall have, among others, six members who own or carry on the business of management of newspapers, that is to say, two representatives from each of the categories of big newspapers, medium newspapers and small newspapers Vide *Explanation* under Sub-section (3) of Section 5, a newspaper is classified as 'Big', 'Medium' or 'Small' according as the total circulation of all its editions has respectively more than 50,000 or between 15,000 and 50,000 or less than 15,000 copies for each issue. With the growth of circulation of newspapers/ periodicals such classification needs to be

reviewed from time to time. Therefore, I propose to amend the said explanation to enable the Government to notify, from time to time, the revised classification on the basis of review of total circulation.

Though, the Central Government have revised the classification of small, medium and big categories of newspapers|periodicals vide a public notice w.e.f. 1st April, 1989, with a view to give benefits|concessions to the small and medium newspapers, this revised classification has not been substituted in the explanation under Section 5(3) of the Press Council Act, 1978. According to this revised classification, the newspapers|periodicals are considered as small, medium and big respectively if their circulation per publishing day is upto 25,000 copies, above 25,000 and upto 75,000 copies and above 75,000 copies respectively.

It has also come to our notice that State Government like Maharashtra is giving benefits/concessions basing on the criteria laid down for big, medium and small newspapers given in the aforesaid explanation of the Press Council Act.

Hence, in order to take care of the growth of circulation of newspapers|periodicals, the classification may need revision from time to time. It is therefore proposed to substitute the existing explanation given under Section 5(3) of the Press Council Act with the following explanation :—

"For the purposes of clause (b), a "newspaper" shall be deemed to be categorised as big, medium or small newspaper on the basis of its circulation per issue, as the Central Government may by notification in the Official Gazette, notify from time to time".

The question was proposed.

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : (बिहार) : महोदया, आपकी अनुमति से मैं एक मिनट का समय लेना चाहता हूं··· **(व्यवधान)**

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज) : आप तो इस पर बोलने वाले हैं।

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : मैं दूसरी बात कहना चाहता हूं। महोदया, आप जानती हैं कि जो यहां पेपर लेड ऑन दि टेबल होता है, वह हिंदी और अंग्रेजी दोनों में होता है। जे.पी.सी. रिपोर्ट की प्रतीक्षा बहुत दिन से हो रही थी। वह आज हाऊस में पेश की गई और आर्डर पेपर में लिखा है कि हिंदी और अंग्रेजी दोनों में की गई लेकिन मुझे दुःख के साथ कहना पड़ रहा है कि हिंदी कापी उपलब्ध नहीं है। इसका मतलब यह हुआ कि आर्डर पपर में जो लिखा गया है वह बिल्कुल गलत है और असत्य है।

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : महोदया, आपकी अनुमति से एक सेकिंड ले रहा हूं···।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज) : आप बोलने वाले हैं··· **(व्यवधान)**

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : मैं बोलने वाला हूं, यह मैं जानता हूं, मैं दूसरी बात कह रहा हूं जो बहुत जरूरी है। हम लोगों के यहां हाउस में "पेपर लेड आन दि टेबल होता है, आप जानती हैं कि ब्रेकेट में हिन्दी और अंग्रेजी दोनों लिखा होता है। आज जिसकी प्रतीक्षा बहुत दिनों से हो रही थी जे.पी.सी. रिपोर्ट, वह आज हाउस में पेश की गई और आर्डर पेपर में, इसीलिए मैंने कहा फेश आर्डर मेरे पास नहीं है, आर्डर पेपर में लिखा है कि हिन्दी और अंग्रेजी में ले की गई। मैडम दुःख के साथ कहना पड़ता है कि हिन्दी का उपलब्ध नहीं है। इसका अर्थ यह हुआ कि आर्डर पेपर पर जो लिखा गया वह बिल्कुल गलत है और यह केवल अंग्रेजी में लेड किया गया जब कि नियमों के अनुसार हिन्दी और अंग्रजी दोनों में पेपर लेड होने चाहिए। मैं आपसे, उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, यह अनुरोध करना चाहता हूं, आप से सादर अनुरोध करना चाहता हूं कि आप सरकार को ऐसी व्यवस्था करने के लिए कहें कि जब तक हिन्दी और अंग्रेजी दोनों की प्रति नहीं हो और पब्लिकेशन काउंटर पर नहीं चली जाएं और मैम्बरों को नहीं मिलने लगे तब तक हाउस में इस तरह से लेड करके सदन की मर्यादा भंग नहीं होनी चाहिए, नियमों की उपेक्षा नहीं होनी चाहिए और इस तरह से गलत तरीके से पेपर लेड आन दि टेबल ब्रेकेट में हिन्दी और इंगलिश बोथ, कभी नहीं आना चाहिए। मैं इस पर आपकी रूलिंग चाहता

हूं और यह भी चाहता हूं कि केवल अंग्रेजी का उपलब्ध है यह भी स्पष्ट हो जाए। आपसे इस संबंध में जानना चाहता हूं...

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज) : आपने बहुत ही वाजिब प्रश्न उठाया शंकर दयाल जी और मैंने सचिवालय से पता किया है कि सुबह जिस समय अहलुवालिया जी ने यह पेपर ले लिए थे, रिपोर्ट ले की थी, उस समय उन्होंने बाकायदा कहा था कि हिन्दी तथा अंग्रजी की एक-एक प्रति। तो सचिवालय ने बताया कि दोनों प्रतियां ही ले हुई थीं। तो इसीलिए वह कह रहे हैं कि शायद डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन के समय में बीच में कोई गड़बड़ है वह देखने के लिए गए हैं पता करने के लिए कि हिन्दी कि प्रति वहां उपलब्ध क्यों नहीं है। लेकिन सुबह सदन के पटल पर हिन्दी और अंग्रेजी दोनों की प्रामाणिक प्रतियां रखी गई हैं, ऐसा मुझे सचिवालय ने मुझे बताया है। और वह पता करने के लिए गए हैं, जो भी सूचना आती है मैं उससे सदन को सूचित करूंगी।

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : अगर हिन्दी की प्रति सदन के पटल पर रखी गई है तो वह देख लीजिए कि कहां रखी गई है। दूसरी बात यह है कि मैं इस सवाल पर चार बार पब्लिकेशन काउंटर पर गया यह दरयाफत करने के लिए कि हिन्दी की प्रति आई या नहीं। चारों बार कहा गया है कि आ रही है। यहां पर कहा गया कि सदन के पटल पर रखी है। इसलिए मैंने दो बजे यह उचित समझा कि इस मामले को उठाऊं। यह बहुत गंभीर मसला है। आप को इस पर रूलिंग भी देनी चाहिए और इसकी जांच भी करनी चाहिए.....(व्यवधान)

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज) : सवेरे अगर बहलुवालिया जी ने हिन्दी और अंग्रेजी दोनों की प्रति नहीं रखी है तो यह मामला बहुत गंभीर है। अगर दोनों रखी गई हैं, केवल डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन काउन्टर पर देर लग रही है तो मामला उतना गंभीर नहीं है इसका मतलब यह है कि दोनों प्रतियां आ गई हैं और वहां पहुंचने में देर लग रही है। ये दोनों चीजें पता लगा रहा है सचिवालय, अतः मैंने उन से कहा कि आप लाइये यहां पर प्रति जो रखी गई और पता लगाइए। जैसे ही मुझे सूचना मिलती है, मैं सदन को सूचित करूंगी। श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर, प्रेस काउंसिल बिल पर बोलिए....

श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर (उत्तर प्रदेश) : महोदया, देखने में तो यह बहुत ही सीधी और सरल बिल दीखता है, मंत्री महोदय ने ऐसा प्रकट करने का प्रयत्न किया है। लेकिन मैं समझता हूं कि इतना सारा जो प्रेस के प्रति रवाया था सरकार का उस को एक बदलाव दिया गया है। पहले निश्चित रूप से कहा गया था श्रेणीबद्ध करके कि 50 हजार तक सर्कुलेशन वाले बड़े अखबार होंगे, उसके बाद मझोले होंगे और छोटे होंगे लेकिन अब आर्बिट्रेरी पावर्स सरकार ने ले ली है, जब चाहे जिसको जितना घोषित कर दे। यह तो गनीमत है कि उन्होंने कहा है कि सर्कुलेशन के आधार पर ही उसका निश्चित किया जाएगा। यह भी एक प्रकार से उचित ही है और यह जो ऐक्सप्लेनेशन है इस विधेयक में जो प्राविजन है उसी पर लागू होगा, दूसरे पर लागू नहीं होगा लेकिन महोदया मैं आपका ध्यान आकर्षित करना चाहता हूं कि सर्कुलेशन के आधार पर बहुत सी चीजें होती हैं, विज्ञापन दिए जाते हैं और आप को भी मालूम होगा कि उसका कुछ अंदाजा लगा कर ही वेज बोर्ड भी इस पर निर्भर करता है। कानूनी तौर पर आप कह दें कि इस में कोई अंतर नहीं होगा क्योंकि लागू नहीं होता लेकिन एक बड़ी विडंबना खड़ी हो जाएगी। अभी ए.बी.सी. की रिपोर्ट के बाद सर्कुलेशन एक तय हो और सरकार दूसरा तय करे तो क्या विडंबना खड़ी होगी। इसलिए मेरा विनम्र निवेदन है कि इस को सरकार अपने हाथ में न ले बल्कि प्रेस काउंसिल को इस का अधिकार देना चाहिए।

महोदय, आप कहेंगे कि प्रैस काउंसिल को अधिकार नहीं दे सकते, मैं कहता हूं दे सकते हैं। मैं प्रेस काउंसिल ऐक्ट की धारा 26 ई को कोट करता हूं—

"Any other matter for which a provision may be made by legislation under this Act provided the legislation made under clause (b) shall be made only with the prior approval of the Central Government."

यह काम सरकार अपने ऊपर लेने के बजाए प्रेस कौंसिल को दे तो उसमें से यह भावना निकलेगी कि सरकार अपने हाथ में समाचार पत्रों

का गला दबा कर नहीं रखना चाहती । अन्यथा पूरी संभावना है कि चाहे कोई भी सरकार आ जाए वह इस के माध्यम से बड़े, छोटे, मझोले पत्रों का निर्णय करने में अपने एक अधिकार का उपयोग कर सकती है। आप कहेंगे वेज बोर्ड तय करता है । दूसरी तरफ वर्किंग एज वेज बोर्ड, दूसरे एबीसी के आधार पर तय करेंगे । अगर कंटराडिक्शन होगा तो आप क्या करेंगे ? यह एक विडम्बना है । इसलिए यह कानून जितना सरल दिखता है उतना सरल है नहीं । इसके साथ एक बात और जोड़ना चाहूंगा । मेरे पास समाचार है कि विदेशी पत्र बहुसंख्या में हिन्दुस्तान में आना चाहते हैं । जैसे मैं उदाहरण दे रहा हूं कि फाइनेन्शियल टाइम्स लंदन है । इसका गठजोड़ आनन्द बाजार पत्रिका के साथ हो रहा है । आनन्द बाजार पत्रिका ने 49 परसेंट इक्वीटी को तय किया है लेकिन सरकार जो है वह 50 परसेंट इक्वीटी देने का निर्णय करने वाली है । क्य इस प्रकार के जो विदेशी पत्र आ जायेंगे, गठजोड़ कर लेंगे उनके आधार पर तय करेंगे कि कौन से बड़े पत्र हैं, कौन से छोटे पत्र हैं । फिर सारी सामग्री विदेशों में जाने वाली है । इस विषय में मैं कहना चाहूंगा सरकार से कि इस पर आप गंभीरता से विचार करें और विदेशी पत्रों को हिन्दुस्तान में न आने दें । मैं याद दिलाना चाहता हूं कि 1950 में 'रीडर डाईजेस्ट' का जब विषय आया था तो पंडित जवाहर लाल नेहरू ने स्वयं कहा था कि यह कोई व्यापार की चीज नहीं है । यह एक ऐसा मीडिया है जो देश को प्रभावित कर सकता है, इसलिए विदेशी पत्रों को हिन्दुस्तान में नहीं आने देना चाहिए । इतना ही नहीं आज के समाचार पत्र में छपा है : "Petition on foreign newspapers entry" उसमें सब दिया है कि कौन-कौन से ऐसे विदेशी पत्र हैं जो आना चाहते हैं । मैं विनम्र निवेदन करूंगा कि अपने पत्रों को विदेशी एकाधिपत्य के जरिये न लावें । आप व्यापार में लाना चाहते हैं, दरवाजा खोलेंगे तो इसका नुकसान है । उसका नुकसान यह है कि हमारा पैसा होगा । लेकिन सारी विचारधारा का आक्रमण ऐसा होगा कि हमारे समाचारपत्र झेल नहीं सकेंगे और सरकार भी इसका मुकाबला नहीं कर सकेगी । मैं उदाहरण देता हूं । मान लीजिए दोनों देशों में नहीं है कोई विदेशी पत्र भी वहां चला सके । इंग्लैंड में है । इंग्लैंड में कोई समाचार पत्र बनता है उसकी शाखा यहां खुले तो देश का क्या होगा । आज जो समाचार पत्र हैं, मैं नाम नहीं लेना चाहता, कलकत्ता से प्रकाशित होने वाला है जो बिल्कुल फंडामेंटलिस्ट का साथ देने वाले हैं क्या आप उनके लिए दरवाजा खोलेंगे ?

मैं ज्यादा समय नहीं लूंगा । एक बात अंतिम कहना चाहता हूं वेज बोर्ड के बारे में । वेज बोर्ड 1985 में बना । 1989 में उसकी रिपोर्ट आ गई लेकिन आजतक लागू नहीं हुई । क्यों ? इतना ही नहीं है बोर्ड ने स्वयं कहा कि हर चार साल के पश्चात् रिव्यू होना चाहिए वेज बोर्ड । आप क्यों नहीं कर रहे हैं ? आपको करना चाहिए । समाचार पत्रों से सम्बन्धित है । एक तरफ आप विदेशी पत्रों को आने देंगे, दूसरी तरफ आप अपने हाथ से निर्णय लेंगे, तीसरी तरफ आप वेज बोर्ड अपारेट नहीं करेंगे । इसके साथ जो कारखानेदार हैं उनकी आप मदद कर रहे हैं । क्यों ? मेरी जानकारी है कि हिन्दी के समाचार पत्र बंद किये जा रहे हैं । टाइम्स आफ इंडिया का हिन्दी का पत्र लखनऊ का बंद हो गया है । हिन्दुस्तान टाइम्स का हिन्दी पत्र बंद होने की स्थिति में है । साप्ताहिक हिन्दुस्तान बंद हो गया है । दैनिक हिन्दुस्तान बंद होने की स्थिति में आ रहा है । तो क्या आप इनक गला घोट कर निर्णय करेंगे ? मेरी अंतिम अपील है कि इसका आप रेव्यू कीजिए एक अधिकार जो आपके हाथ में है इस अधिकार को मत लीजिए । प्रेस कौंसिल को दे दीजिए । जैसा पहले एक्ट में है सीमाएं हैं कि इतने हजार का बड़ा होगा, इतने हजार का मझोला होगा, इतने हजार का छोट होगा । वह आप आइडेंटी-फाइ कर दीजिए । यह नीति परिवर्तन उचित होगा । इतना कहकर मैं इस प्रकार से इसक विरोध करता हूं । मैं समझता हूं सरकार इस पर ध्यान देगी और अपनी नीति में परिवर्तन करेगी ।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज) . शंकर दयाल सिंह जी जो प्रश्न आपने उठाया है मैंने पता लगा लिया है । सुबह किसी तरह से कोई कोताही सदन के पटल पर रिपोर्ट रखने में नहीं हुई है । यह उसकी हिन्दी कापी है, प्रमाणिक कापी है जिसको मैंने मंगाकर देख लिया है । वितरण केन्द्र पर जरूर देरी हो रही है, थोड़ा विलम्ब हो रहा है । लेकिन मैंने कहा है, थोड़ी देर मे

वितरण केन्द्र पर कापियां पहुंच जायेंगी । लेकिन सबह सदन के पटल पर अंग्रेजी और हिन्दी दोनों में रिपोर्ट रखी गई थी । प्रमाणिक प्रति मेरे पास उपलब्ध है ।

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE (Maharashtra) : Madam, I am happy to see you in the Chair. I missed your very august presence in the last few weeks and I am happly that the futile boycott has been lifted by your party.

Madam, when we talk about freedom of expression, it is the first freedom which a human being enjoys. If that freedom disappears, no other freedom will survive. Therefore, our Constitution lays down the personal freedom under article 19(1). Under article 19(1) we find that the very first freedom is freedom of express on and speech. I am glad that we are taking this opportunity to discuss a few fundamental issues regarding this freedom.

The Bill is innocuous. It is necessitated by the unprecedented growth of newspapers in our country. I am happy at the growth. It is a sign of a vibrant democracy. It is a sign of increasing literacy. It is a sign of the sagacity, which is reflected in the recent elections, of the average voter who is also an average reader. Therefore, at the outset, I must compliment the invisible figure, who is the reader, who has sustained this freedom by supporting the circulation on such a large scale. Now, the Press Council, like the Medical Council or the Bar Council, is really a body of peers in the newspaper business to maintain standards of newspapers and news agencies in our country. There are a few things which I want to say. The first thing is that this body has no teeth at all whereas the other two bodies have. Wherever they have a control, they have got certain legally enforceable authority. This body enjoys only a moral authority of issuing some kind of warning or, at worst, some kind of censure which, I feel, is inadequate. I am aware that the Press Council itself is not very much in favour of having more teeth. Speaking for myself, I think the Press Council should have more teeth. It is said that free press is undoubtedly a great power. Exercising its freedom in a positive and constructive manner the press can promote social cohesion and communal amity and strengthen national integration. It can in the modern days also contribute a lot to a very balanced development and economic growth of the country. Exercised irresponsibly, in an unbridled manner, this power is capable of doing a good deal of mischief and other harm. But in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, if the control is from without, it proves to be more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. It is this concept of self-regulation which constitutes the bedrock of the *modus operandi* of the Press Council. Its essence is that the journalists can be kept to the path of professional rectitude through moral castigation by heir peers. I think this is not enough. There should be some kind of teeth in the Act. There should be a punitive action. This is not the occasion to go into the details of it. But I do hope the Minister will take cognizance of what I have said, and will try to introduce some teeth. Without that it becomes utopia. It becomes idealistic and the mischief is only aggravated. Everyone of us is not Mahatma Gandhi. Unless there is a power of control, a power which is to be used for the growth of this freedom and not to curb the freedom, the reverse forces may cause grave danger to this very very precious freedom. Another thing which I want to bring to the notice of the House is that we have not yet been able to lay down an enforceable code of conduct, which we have in the UK, which we have in the USA. It is more for the newspapers to evolve a code of conduct which will not only be there on paper but will be binding and will be followed in observance. I will say only one or two more things. This is an occasion to talk about the Press. What I am going to say is also reflected by the very poor presence in

the Press gallery today. I think a lot needs to be done by the Press itself. I think a lot of introspection is necessary.

PROF. SAURIN BHATTACHARYA (West Bengal) : No interest would be roused by us. Therefore, the Press....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : Mr. Bhattacharya, don't interrupt. ....(*Interruptions*)....

SHRI VISHVJIT P. SINGH (Maharashtra) : Let us see our own attendance and then talk about the Press. ...(*Interruptions*)..

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE : In fact, when I started he was not there. (*Interruptions*)..

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : Mr. Singh, don't interrupt. Mr. Bhandare, please continue.

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE : The Press has to do a lot of introspection. I say it with great responsibility. Today there is a tendency to emphasise sensationalism in place of substantial issues. That is what we see in this House. Everybody is interested in the Zero Hour somehow or the other to catch the eyes of the Press. They want their issue to be reported in the Press even if it has nothing to do with the substantial issue. I am happy that my friend, Shri Vishvjit P. Singh is interested to see his own reflection in the mirror. If we have to take over society..(*Interruptions*). I just said it. He may not agaree with me.

SHRI VISHVJIT P. SINGH : I agree with you. It is our fault...(*Interruptions*).

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : Mr. Singh, you address the Chair, not the Member. ..(*Interruptions*).

SHRI VISHVJIT P. SINGH : Madam, if we raise an issue which is useless, if we raise it for the sake of gaining publicity, it is our fault. We must do some introspection about ourselves.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : Mr. Singh, please sit down...(*Interruptions*).

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY : The Press should not give a distorted picture.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : Mr. Narayanasamy, please sit down. Mr. Bhandare. please continue.

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE : Madam, as I said, I am happy about the unprecedented growth. I am particularly happy about the vernacular Press which reaches the common man. Sometimes we get a feeling that many of the articles which appear in the Press are inspired or motivated and sometimes, even a much worse feeling, that they are planted.

SHRI VISHVJIT P. SINGH : Absolutely right.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : Mr. Singh, you don't have to comment whether it is right or wrong. You compliment him in the lobby, not in the House.

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE : Madam, I don't stand here for any compliments. I am only expressing my concern so that this freedom is nourished. It should grow and it is growing. We are a wonderland of democracy. We will remain one because we have this freedom of expression in our country. The best vehicle for this freedom is the Press. It is a constructive suggestion. I do not have any rancour about it. I am only expressing what is uppermost in my mind. The second thing is that there are reservations and sometimes they are true that our Press is still controlled by

very rich proprietors and that does affect the freedom, particularly of the writer, of the editor and even of the reader. Therefore, to some extent I share the reservation which has been expressed by the hon. Member and my dear friend, Mr. Mathur, about allowing the foreign newspapers also to come in because this media can very easily be manipulated. At this stage I may also add that since we have some control over the print media, a time has come when we should have some control over the electronic media also. Then there is one more thing which I want to say. I feel there should be greater autonomy given to the Press Council. I find that many unnecessary curbs have been in existence since 1978. The Press Council has done very good work, very substantial work and it has also produced some of the best reports. I am speaking, because I represent this august House on the Press Council. One of the reports which we did was on the human rights situation in Kashmir. You should have seen, when our Committee headed by Mr. Verghese went there, even the army came forth, the security forces came forth without claiming any privileges and gave us full access. We have said the truth and this report has now been internationally accepted. We have been trying not only for a certain amount of discipline and self-restraint, but we also endeavour to maintain very high standards of ethics. We have used opportunities to see that there is openness and transparency in the media and in the society. In fact, we requested the Defence Ministry, let it that defence matters should not be made a holy cow. Let them also come out and share things with the public and I am glad that Shri Sharad Pawar, when he was the Defence Minister, agreed to this. Now, the so-called Defence Ministry, which was treated as top secret and this and that will be more open and more transparent. People will know more about it. The autonomy portion, I have covered. All that I will say is that the media should grow. There will be many many more newspapers and in many languages. There will be many many more readers because we are the second largest in terms of population. Given our history of democracy and our history of the rule of law, I see an unprecedented bright future for journalism in our country. You will have not only readers, but you will have discerning readers. You will have vocal readers. You will have readers who will mould the society and that is the need of the hour so as to take the society ahead on a path of development, on a path of equity, on a path which is against communal disharmony and a path which is against any kind of social incohesion. This is our task, whether as Members of Parliament or as the Press or as readers. Ultimately, it is the freedom of the reader which is most precious. Let us all today, on the occasion of passing this innocuous Bill which has been necessitated by unprecedented growth, resolve that we will take this freedom further in our country. Thank you.

SHRI VISHVJIT P. SINGH : Very well spoken.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : I told you to compliment him in the lobby and not here.

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, सबसे पहले तो आप जब अपने आसन पर आईं तो जितने वक्ता हैं सबने आपको इसके लिये धन्यवाद दिया, मैं भी इसमें अपने आपको शामिल करना चाहता हूं और आपको धन्यवाद और बधाई देते हुए कहना चाहता हूं कि :

"दिल में रहिए, कभी आंखों में भी आती रहिए, और

दोनों पर आपके हैं, दोनों बसाती रहिए"।

उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, हमारे सामने जो प्रैस परिषद (संशोधन) विधेयक, 1992 आया है, विधेयक के बारे में माथुर साहब और मंडोली जी ने अपने विचार व्यक्त किए, मैं इस संबंध में दो-चार बातें आपके माध्यम से सरकार तक पहुंचाना चाहता हूं। जहां तक प्रैस का, उसकी स्वतंत्रता का, उसके अस्तित्व का और उसके महत्व का

प्रश्न है सभी जानते हैं कि लोकतंत्र में प्रेस की आजादी के ऊपर ही लोकतंत्र निर्भर करता है और किसी भी देश की स्वाधीनता के सबसे बड़े महत्वपूर्ण बिंदुओं में प्रेस आती है।

भारत में इमरजेंसी के समय एक दुर्भाग्य का भी क्षण आया था। आजादी के पहले तो बहुत ऐसे मौके आये थे लेकिन आजादी के बाद ऐसा मौका आया था आपातकाल में जब प्रेस की स्वाधीनता छीन ली गयी थी और कोई भी अखबार किसी भी रूप में निकलता था तो पहले उसके छपे हुए पन्ने को कट्रोल्ड रूप से देखा जाता था और जब वह पास होकर बाहर निकलता था तब प्रसारण में जाता था। नतीजा उसका यह हुआ कि जब आपातकाल की स्थिति समाप्त हुई तो देश में पढ़ने की भूख इस तरह से जागी कि जिन पत्रों का प्रसारण उस जमाने में 20 हजार था उनका प्रसारण एक लाख तक पहुंच गया। यह एक स्वस्थ बात थी।

आज जो हमारे सामने प्रसारण की संख्या है है उसमें में पूरे देश में 28,451 समाचार पत्र प्रकाशित हो रहे हैं, हर भाषा को मिला करके। यह 1991 की जो रिपोर्ट है उसके अनुसार मैं कह रहा हूं। इसमें एक चीज जो देखने में आई है वह यह है कि विदेशी पत्रों को प्रसारण संख्या आज भी अधिक नहीं है। जैसे अंग्रेजी भाषा की वकालत प्रायः लोग करते हैं, उसमें इनकी प्रसारण संख्या अधिक नहीं है बल्कि सब अधिक बिकने वाला जो पत्र मलयालम मनोरमा वह केरल में निकलता है। एन्टोनी साहब, हमारे मित्र यहां बैठे हुए हैं, इनको मैं बधाई देता हूं कि केरल में सबसे अधिक वहां का अपना भाषाई पत्र मलयालम मनोरमा बिकता है। उसके बाद जो 18 सर्वाधिक समाचार पत्र बिक्री के भारत में हैं, उनमें आपको सुनकर खुशी होगी कि 4 हिंदी में तथा 9 अन्य भाषाओं में है। 9 और 4 केवल 5 ऐसे अंग्रेजी के पत्र हैं जो 18 में आते हैं, यानी कि उनकी संख्या 1/4 अच्छी खासी है। जो बात आपने कही है, जो आप संशोधन विधेयक हमारे सामने लाये हैं उसमें आपने एक लिस्ट बनाई है बड़े, मध्यम और छोटे पत्रों की, आपने प्रसारण के अनुसार उनका वर्गीकरण किया है। मैं सरकार को उनका फिगर दिखलाते हुए यह कहना चाहता हूं कि अगर आप बड़े, मध्यम और छोटे पत्रों के अनुसार रिप्रेजेंटेशन देने जा रहे हैं और प्रेस परिषद का गठन करने जा रहे हैं तो उनका आधार यह प्रसारण न होकर भाषाई पत्रों का आधार होना चाहिये। भाषाई पत्रों का मैं इसलिये कह रहा हूं कि जहां आपने केवल प्रसारण की बात रखी है वहां भाषाई पत्र पीछे छूट जायेंगे। बड़े पत्रों के प्रसारण की जो बात आप करते हैं उसमें क्या है? आज जितने भी पत्र आते हैं--बहुत सारे पत्र निकल रहे हैं उनके मालिक ही उनके सम्पादक हैं। पत्रकार बेचारे वहां कहां हैं। पत्रकार कलम घिसते रहते हैं, खबरें जुटाते रहते हैं, जोखिम मोल लेते रहते हैं, अपने आपको बराबर खबरें तमें रख करके समाचार लाते हैं लेकिन उनका नाम कहीं नहीं आता है, मालिक का नाम ही आजकल अधिकांश पत्रों में सम्पादक की जगह जा रहा है। मैं चाहता हूं कि आपका यह जो प्रेस परिषद विधेयक है यह पत्रों के ऊपर कुछ विशेष ध्यान दे।

इसलिए मैं आपको भाषायी पत्रों की भी बात कर रहा हूं और साथ-साथ मैं यह कहना चाहता हूं कि केवल प्रसारण ही इसके वर्गीकरण का आधार नहीं होना चाहिए। महोदया, आज स्थिति क्या हो रही है? पत्रों का महत्व टेलीविजन या आकाशवाणी से भी बहुत बढ़कर है। आम आदमी वहीं जाता है। टेलीविजन मनोरंजन का साधन हो सकता है, आकाशवाणी समाचार प्रसारण का साधन हो सकता है, लेकिन अखबार केवल मनोरंजन और समाचार ही नहीं है, बल्कि स्वस्थ विचार भी है। आज आप देखेंगे, कि समाचार फ्रंट पेज पर रहता है मुख्य पृष्ठ पर, लेकिन आज मुख्य पृष्ठ जो है वह उतने महत्व का नहीं है जितना की चौथा पृष्ठ संपादकीय का हो गया है। लोग संपादकीय पढ़ते हैं। संपादकीय के साथ-साथ वहां जो एक विशेष लेख रहता है चाहे आर्थिक हो, सामाजिक हो, राजनीतिक हो, सांस्कृतिक हो, उसको लोग पढ़ते हैं और बहुत गौर से पढ़ते हैं। तो पाठक समाचार के लिए ही नहीं बल्कि विचार के लिए भी पत्रों को जानना चाहता है। कहीं केवल आप प्रसारण को रख देंगे और छोटे पत्रों को अगर आपने प्रसारण में बहुत बड़ा महत्व अगर नहीं दिया गया तो मैं समझता हूं कि हमारे

लिए यह अभिशाप की बात होगी । आज भाषायी पत्र बंद हो रहे हैं इसलिए कि व्यवसायिकता की दृष्टि से बड़े पूंजीपति मालिक जो हैं वे देखते हैं कि इनमें हमको कुछ लाभ नहीं हो रहा है । साप्ताहिक हिन्दुस्तान बंद हो गया, दिनमान बंद हो गया, छोटा सा बच्चों का इतनी अच्छी जो पत्रिका "पराग" निकलती है वह बंद हो गई, सारिका बंद हो गई है, इतना अच्छी पत्रिका है । लेकिन यह तो बड़े व्यवसायिक समूहों से जुड़े हुए पत्र हैं । पत्र को समाचार का माध्यम बनाया जाए, विचार का माध्यम बनाया जाए, पत्र को व्यवसाय का माध्यम नहीं बनाया जाना चाहिए । आज बड़े औद्योगिक घरानें पत्र निकाल रहे हैं इसलिए नहीं कि वे पत्रकारिता की सेवा कर रहे हैं या भाषा की सेवा कर रहे हैं, बल्कि इसलिए कि इसके जरिए राजनीति को अपनी मुट्ठी में रख कर सरकार पर हम कितना दबाव रख सकते हैं, इसलिए बड़े औद्योगिक घरानें इन पत्रों को निकाल रहे हैं। यह बात साफ हो गई है । मैं चाहता हूं कि ऐसे समय में सरकार को कुछ आगे बढ़ना चाहिए और सरकार इनकी सुरक्षा नहीं करती है तो वहां कैसे इनकी सुरक्षा होगी इसलिए मैं जो इनका उद्देश्य रहा है, माननीय मंत्रीजी से मैं कहूंगा कि आपने समाचार-पत्रों तथा समाचार एजेंसियों के स्तर को बनाए रखने के प्रयोजन के लिए प्रैस परिषद् की स्थापना हुई थी, मैं पूछना चाहता हूं महोदया, क्या समाचार-पत्रों और समाचार एजेंसियों की सच में रक्षा या सुरक्षा हो रही है ? मुझे तो ऐसे नहीं लगता । अगर आप समाचार-पत्रों और संवाद समितियों की रक्षा की बात करते हैं तो यह कोई साइन बोर्ड की रक्षा तो नहीं है, संवाद समितियां या समाचारपत्र का अर्थ क्या हुआ ? पत्रकारों से तो आज अगर इसमें शुद्ध दृष्टि रखते और सच में आपकी दृष्टि अगर ठीक और सही होती तो आप प्रसार भारती बिल को पास कर देते । इतने दिन से आपके पास जो पत्रकार वेतन बोर्ड की घोषणा की बात लंबित है उसको आप करते । बिहार एक छोटा सा और बहुत ही पिछड़ा राज्य है आप जानती हैं, लेकिन वहां के मुख्य मंत्री को मैं धन्यवाद दूंगा कि उस मुख्य मंत्री ने अभी हाल में पत्रकारों की पेंशन की घोषणा कर दी कि जो एक्रिडिटेड जर्नलिस्ट होंगे, पत्रकार होंगे, उनको एक हजार रुपये माहवारी की पेंशन दी जाएगी । क्या केन्द्र सरकार ऐसा नहीं कर सकती है ? केन्द्र सरकार के तो यह हाथ में है । इसलिए मैं आपके माध्यम से सरकार से कहना चाहता हूं कि वह समाचार एजेंसियों को महत्व दे । इसलिए कि समाचार एजेंसियों को महत्व देने से सरकार का भी इसमें चलता है उन्हें एजेंसियों के माध्यम से आकाशवाणी और दूरदर्शन तक भी हमारे समाचार पहुंचते हैं, विदेशों में भी जाते हैं । पत्रकारों को सुरक्षा तथा सुविधा दें इसलिए कि पत्रकारों की सुरक्षा और सुविधा सरकार यदि नहीं देगी तो केवल व्यवसायिक घरानों से वह नहीं चलेगा, कुछ लोगों का चल जाता है । भाषाई पत्रों को संरक्षण दें । जनता की सेवा मानकर, क्योंकि जनता को एक स्वस्थ विचार चाहिए, उनको जिस तरह की सुविधाएं मिलनी चाहिए, वे मुहैया कराएं । दूरदर्शन में जो विदेशी चैनल इतने आ गए हैं, जिस तरह से हमारी संस्कृति समाप्त होती चली जा रही है, हमारा समाज विकृत होता चला जा रहा है और हमारी जो नई पीढ़ी है वह गुमराह होती चली जा रही है, उसको भी आप इसके माध्यम से बचा सकते हैं, उसे आप बचाएं ।

अंत में मैं यह कहना चाहता हूं, बहुत विस्तार में मैं इसलिए नहीं जा रहा हूं कि अगर कुछ मेरा समय बच जाए तो हमारे दूसरे साथी भी बोलना चाहते हैं दो-चार मिनट, तो मैं यह कहना चाहता हूं कि पीत-पत्रकारिता का जो एक रोल है या पत्रकारिता के ऊपर यह जो एक इल्जाम आता है, उससे भी उसकी रक्षा करनी है । जैसा मैंने प्रारम्भ में ही कहा है कि स्वस्थ विचार और सही समाचार, ये दोनों पत्रकारिता के लिए बहुत आवश्यक हैं लेकिन होता यह है कि पीत-पत्रकारिता या हल्के-फुल्के समाचार, बिना पुष्टि किए समाचार, बहुत सारे आंकड़े हैं मैं उन्हें नहीं देना चाहता लेकिन मैंने अपने पास एक ऐसी कटिंग भी रखी है जिसमें हमने इस तरह के कई समाचार देखे हैं । एक दिन के अखबारों को, अगर कहीं दुर्घटना हो जाए तो, आप अगर एक साथ सामने रखकर देखें तो कहीं पर 25, कहीं पर 50, कहीं पर 95, अलग-अलग आंकड़े मिलेंगे । तो मैं चाहता हूं कि सरकार का इसके ऊपर अंकुश रहना जरूरी है, सरकार इनको देखे और इन चीजों को देखते

हुए क्योंकि मंत्री महोदय एक भले आदमी हैं और बार-बार जब मैं इनको देखता हूं तो मुझे लगता है कि निश्चय ही इनके मन में एक शुद्धता है और जो मैंने बातें कही हैं, वह निश्चित रूप से लोकतंत्र के एक सशक्त पाए के रूप में पत्रकारिता को, मीडिया को अपने सामने रखते हुए कही हैं । मुझे विश्वास है कि मेरी इन बातों पर वे ध्यान देंगे । आपका बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद ।

SHRI VITHALBHAI M. PATEL (Gujarat) : Madam, the Bill which has been brought forward by the Minister is a very simple Bill. But the Press Council is an important institution and whatever Mr. Bhandare and others may say, we are not happy with the functioning of the Press Council. When it was established in 1978, a goal was fixed for the Council and it was laid down as to what it should do. But the Council has not succeeded in achieving it. I would like to point out two things in this connection. The Council was to ensure on the part of the newspapers, agencies and journalists the best standards of public taste based on both the right and responsibility of citizenship. Here the Press Council has not succeeded. Today, the Press is enjoying full freedom. They can write anything and everything. They can abuse Members of Parliament, they can write about Parliament and they can write about the Government and about everybody. But it was the duty of the Press Council to protect the rights of the citizens also. The Press has no right to abuse the citizens or any citizen without any basis. But, today, it is not so. I do not say this about all the newspapers. But some of the newspapers do blackmail and it has become a business also and there is nothing which can check them.

Coming to the question of freedom of the Press, who is enjoying the freedom today ? Are the journalists enjoying freedom ? Today, this freedom is enjoyed by the proprietors. The editors take emoluments as editors, but they cannot write correctly two paragraphs in the regional languages. Can the Minister tell us who are real journalists ? A person who cannot write a paragraph correctly in the language in which the newspaper is published is getting all the facilities and he can go with the Prime Minister and he can go with the President as a journalist abroad. So, there must be some qualifications for the editor, as to who can be an editor. For doctors, we have some degree. For lawyers, we have some qualifications. For editors also, there should be some qualifications. Otherwise, any Tom, Dick and Harry can become an editor. And today they have become also.

Sir, what is the freedom for the journalists in the regional languages or language newspapers ? At least, in English newspapers, they have some freedom. But in language newspapers, the journalists are working like bonded labour. They do not have any freedom. They have to work like a bonded labour. And whatever the proprietor wants, they have to write. And if he does not agree, he loses his job. And a number of journalists have lost their jobs because they did not agree with the proprietors. And here the Press Council has failed to protect the rights of the journalists. And if they have no teeth, they should ask for the teeth. According to my knowledge, once the Press Council asks the Government to provide some teeth, they can enquire into the complaints of the citizens. Now they say, yes, the newspaper is guilty, they have done wrong, but they cannot do anything. They can only pass a resolution that a particular newspaper has done wrong and is guilty. Even if the same newspaper is proved guilty three times, the Press Council cannot do anything. So, the Press Council should be given teeth. If the same newspaper, often and often is proved to be guilty, then some punishment should be given to the newspaper, and it should be recommended by the Press Council. I do not say that the Government should take action themselves. The Government can stop the advertisements of DAVP or even newsprint quotas. But I do not want the Government to take this function of taking action into their hands. Let the Press Council itself decide

about the freedom of the press. Now, we are going to the 21st century. So, it is not possible to stop either the foreign newspaper or anybody. After the GATT agreement is signed, Indian borders are open for everybody. And the Clause which was introduced in the Press Council Bill was : "To concern itself with development such as consultation or other aspect of the ownership of newspapers and news agencies which may affect the independence of the press". It has proved fruitless. What is happening today ? All the big industrialists have started their own newspapers. Those who do no have their own newspapers upto ll now, they have already started their own newspapers. From the capital you see that every big industrial house has its own newspaper. And Shri Shankar Dayal Singh is right. They have not started the newspapers for the service of the people. They have started to get benefits, to pressurise the Government to change their policies. And all these things are possible in this country. But there is no remedy. No institution is there which can control this thing. And the Government will have to consider about this aspect, at least, in the interest of the nation. And if they do not, then it will be free-for-all tomorrow. Anybody can write anything. Anybody can open and start a newspaper and write anything. Everything will go on. So, you think again and see that the Press Council constructively does some real job which they will have to do in the coming days. Up till now what the Press Council has done is this. Somebody complains to the Press Council. They call the newspaper. They take the statement. Then they say, yes, perhaps, he is guilty. That is all. More than that, they can not to any thing.

Mr. Shankar Dayal Singh, I wanted to remind you about one thing.

आप प्रेस की सुविधा की बात करते रहे, आपको अब मैं क्या बताऊं । आपने जब आपकी पार्टी की सरकार आई तो जिन पत्रकारों की आमदनी कम होती थी उनको सरकार मकान किराया वाला मकान देती थी, परन्तु आपको सरकार के जमाने में वह बंद कर दिया गया और आज तक शुरू नहीं हुआ । हमारे समय में भी यह शुरू नहीं हुआ है, यह बंद हो पड़ा है ।

About accommodation also I want to say something. Pressmen themselves have proposed that those journalists who own a house in Delhi should not be entitled for government accommodation. Today more than 100 journalists have their own accommodation in Delhi and they are still occupying government houses at cheaper rents. Poor journalists who are low-paid do not have their accommodation in Delhi and yet they are deprived of this facility. Journalists owning houses in Delhi earn a monthly rent of Rs. 12,000|- or Rs. 15,000|- and they are given government houses at a nominal rent of Rs. 200 or Rs. 300 a month. I suggest that they should be evicted from these houses and this accommodation should be given to low-paid journalists who do not own a house in Delhi. I don't know why the Government is afraid of taking such a step. If you can throw out Members of Parliament, why can't you take similar measure against the journalists ? Suppose I do not remain a Member of Parliament tomorrow, will you allow me to stay in the same house at the same rent ? You will throw me out. So, such accommodation occupied by these journalists should be got vacated and it should be given to low-paid journalists. This is what the pressmen themselves have been demanding. Then there is a code of conduct which was prepared by the pressmen themselves. But nobody is following it today. If the Press Council would have tried to see that the code of conduct which was prepared by themselves was properly enforced, some good work would have been done by the Press Council. I support the Bill but I hope the Minister would think over the issues raised by me and see that the whole Press Council Act is amended in order to cater to the needs of the coming days.

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह मैडम, इससे पहले कि सुकोमल जी बोलें, मुझे हिंदी प्रति मिल गई है। मैं इसके लिए आपको और सेक्रेटेरियेट को धन्यवाद देता हूं।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज) : वितरण केन्द्र पर भी पहुंच गई है।

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN (West Bengal) : This is an innocuous Bill and I do not have any objection to the contents of the Bill. The Government may take a decision about it. But I have to mention a few points.

There are small, medium and large newspapers. I do not know how the Government decides about the representation of various newspapers in the Press Council of India. There are many newspapers run on commercial lines. There are newspapers run by the political parties and trade unions which are weekly newspapers and monthly newspapers and they regularly subscribe to the Press Council of India. But when the Government decides about the representation in the Press Council, it is mostly the commercial newspapers which get nominated to the Press Council of India. Journalists of political party newspapers and trade unions are not given the representation. I myself have the experience. I get two monthly journals, one in English and one in Hindi. The English journal has a circulation of more than 50,000. We subscribe to the Press Council of India regularly but I do not know how representation to the Press Council of India is made on behalf of our journal. We are in the dark. This is one point.

Second point is about closure of newspapers. I do not know whether the Press Council have the authority over this aspect or whether the Government has paid any attention to it because so many people are just thrown out of employment in the event of closure of a newspaper. I can give the example of Calcutta. There are two newspapers. One is Amrit Bazar Patrika and the other is Yugantar. They remained closed for many years just for the fault of the owners and the management. I do not know whether the Press Council of India has any authority to look into the matter and whether they can take steps and advise the Government to re-open such newspapers. Anyway, they were reopened, but through other channels.

My next point is that this representation on the Press Council of India of various newspapers would be very much distorted if foreign newspapers and foreign news agencies are also allowed to operate in India. As you know, the Government is now following a policy of liberalisation. In the case of media also if you follow that policy and foreign newspapers and foreign news agencies are allowed to operate in India, if they are allowed to come to India, what would happen ? Already, many Indian newspapers are very much interested in sharing their equity with foreign newspapers. In that case, what would happen is that the entire representation in the Press Council of India would be distorted and, in fact, foreign interests would be represented on the Press Council of India. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government is having any policy of inviting foreign newspapers and foreign news agencies to come and operate in India.

My last point is in regard to the standard of newspapers. I do not know whether the Press Council of India has anything to do with it. Madam, nowadays, in every aspect of life, we find that there is degradation. A gradual degradation is taking place in almost every aspect of human life. The newspapers also are not out of it. It is very much necessary that the publication of news and representation of facts should be properly done. It is because newspapers have a very big role to play in the society in respect of culture, in respect of morality, in respect of education, etc. Therefore, if truthful representation is not made by newspapers, if perverted and distorted news are published in newspapers and character assassination is resorted to, what would happen is that instead of improving their standard,

instead of playing their due role in our democracy, the newspapers would distort it; they would jeopardise it.

It has become a practice among many newspapers that to increase their sale, they indulge in sensationalism. They also indulge in character assassination frequently of various political activists, political leaders, trade union activists, etc. The Press Council of India should oversee such things. At present, the position is that in such cases, if we go to the Press Council of India, it takes a long time. It takes such a long time that the people forget the whole thing. The reputation of these persons is damaged by such character assassination. The Press Council of India comes out with a mild censure after three-four years. Madam, this is not sufficient. This only gives indulgence to the newspapers. This only encourages the newspapers to go on with their sensationalism and character assassination.

Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to take steps to see that the functioning of the Press Council of India is toned up so that this sort of sensationalism and character assassination is stopped. I stand for Press freedom. At the same time, I want that this sort of perverted and distorted journalism should be put an end to.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES (Goa) : Madam Vice-Chairman, I support the Press Council of India (Amendment) Bill, 1993. This Bill is innocuous and technical in nature. Section 13 of the Press Council Act says that the objective of the Council shall be to preserve the freedom of press and to maintain and improve the standard of newspapers and news agencies in India. But if we look around in the country, we see that only freedom is there, but there are no attempts to improve the standard and ethics in this important organ of democracy.

Madam, it is said that press is one of the essential pillars for the survival of any democracy. Section 5 of the Act itself goes to prove it in that the Chairman of the Press Council of India is appointed by a Committee consisting of the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and one of the members elected from amongst the 28 members of the Press Council of India. This goes to prove that this is a very important organ for any democracy to survive.

Now, the hon. Minister has come before the House to have a blanket permission to issue executive orders from time to time. But I would like to know what would be the yardstick for judging the newspapers as big, medium and small. It is being sought to be done away with. The Government would come out with executive orders from time to time. I think it would be better if the hon. Miniser takes the House into confidence and specifies the modalities in this regard. It would be better if he lays down the yardstick.

I support this amendment because this was a blanket rule applicable to the whole country. Madam, there are big cities, metropolitan cities and small cities. Earlier, newspapers having a circulation of 50,000 and more were categories as bing; between 15,000 and 50,000 were supposed to be medium and below 15,000 small. So, even if anyone printed about 100 newspapers, he was supposed to be a small newspaper-man. This facility was misused because they benefitted from getting newsprint quota, which is a subsidised quota.

SHRI VITHALBHAI M. PATEL : No.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES : It is not at market rate. That is my concept. The market rate is very exorbitant. In this way, the newsprint quota was misused for commercial purposes. There was no mechanism for counting certain amount of copies. I think the Government should adopt some foolproof system for counting; there should be some yardstick for this purpose.

The hon. Minister said that there is an increase in the circulation of newspapers. I think it is just the reverse. The newspaper has become obsolete because the electronic media has taken over. The newspaper is catering to the needs of the urban elite, educated people in the cities, whereas the T.V. has taken over in the villages. So, I think the Government has to give the maximum emphasis on the electronic media to see that the people are educated.

Then, I do agree with my colleagues when they have mentioned that there is no freedom of the press in the country. We see and it is a common fact that every newspaper is either owned by an industrial house or a business house, and this has been used as an organ of arm-twisting of the Government of the day to get a licence or to change the policy. I give an example of my own State of Goa. We have 5 industrial houses and six newspapers are owned by them. If any Member of Parliament speaks anything against their interest. He is blacked out. I took the cause of the Konkan railway because in Goa the environment was sought to be destroyed, because the Konkan railway was diverted at the behest of the mine owners from the mining belt to the fragile area, the coastal area. From that time I am totally blacked out in those newspapers, but I do not mind; it is a public cause, it is a bigger cause-to protect the environment. So, I do agree with the hon. Members that big newspapers are owned by certain industrial houses. I think it is high time that we we have a disciplinary code whereby the freedom of the press is not misused. There are no set standadrds for that.

Now, the Press Council is a large body with a Chairman and 28 members. Most of the pressmen sit there, I do not think this Press Council will be able to do any justice if an ordinary citizen makes a complaint about the freedom of the press. If the pressmen themselves sit in judgement, how can they do any justice ? It is against the natural law. So, I would suggest that there should be a smaller body within the Press Council, with a Chairman, who is usually a retired Judge of a High Court or Supreme Court, and four more members not representing the press, not representing the fourth estate. This body should have quasi-judicial powers. I think this is the only way to see that the freedom of the press is not misused. Of course, an ordinary citizen cannot go to a court of law and if he goes and it is proved that they are guilty, they just give a small clarification in the press that they are sorry. So, that is no protection. And I did mention that the policy of the big newsper is that of 'give and take'. Unless you come forward with a comprehensive Bill, comprehensive legislation, I do not think we will have the freedom of the press in the real sense. With these few submissions I conclude.

DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI (Andhra Pradesh) : Madam, it is a small Bill and there is nothing to oppose, but I would like to add that the Press Council has no teeth at all. It does not matter whether the number of members is more or less, but some teeth should be given to the Press Council. I would like to add that among the representatives of the newspapers, it is better that it is confined only to journalists who work for the newspapers instead of those who carry on the business of management etc. And it is time, if not high time, that the management of the newspapers should be delinked from the industrial houses. If some industrial house runs a newspaper and run other industries, there it becomes almost a lobby to further their own interests in the parent industry. Most of the newspapers run by the industrial houses only become showpieces or public relations affairs. So it is better to see that they are delinked from the industrial houses.

The second aspect I would like to touch in this connection is about circulation. Though the categirization of newspapers according to the ABC figures is there, I don't think even the ABC figures are foolproof. So some other device may be evolved to see that the circulation figures are more accurate.

Ours is one of the few countries where freedom of the press and expression is there, and we are enjoying complete freedom of the press. There was a joke sometime back that even today, in some countries we are having some regimented press. We witnessed the same from 1975 to 1977 during the dark days of Emergency when many people were imprisoned and freedom of the press was curtailed. Then the liberal press came forward to fight against censorship and to fight against the Emergency. When compared to the so-called progressive press, the liberal press came forward to fight. Whether it was the Indian Express or the Statesman, Opinion or Freedom First, they fought best and they fought to the end against censorship, etc.

There was a joke sometime back when the erstwhile USSR was there. Two journalists, one from the American side and another from the Russian side had met. The American correspondent said, "There is complete freedom of expression in my country. I can straightway walk to the White House and say, 'Mr. President, you are a fool !' My Government does not find fault with me." Immediately the Russian correspondent also said, "I can also straightway walk to the White House and say, 'Mr. President, you are an idiot', and my Government also does not find fault with me !" That was how freedom of expression was there in some of the regimented countries.

I am sorry to state that the existing press, whether it is managed by industrial houses or not, is not playing its role properly or discharging its obligations towards the society. Precious little has been done to eradicate social like illiteracy, poverty, untouchability, casteism, violence, terrorism, etc. They are also reflecting the image of the society and they are not taking any lead to educte the public in this direction. I am also sorry to state that nowadays it has become a dictum with almost all the newspapers that they are portraying and adding the caste factor. In electioneering, about an election being won or lost, they are calculating it on the basis of composition of castes in the various constituencies—how many Ahirs are there, how many Jats are there, how many Brahmins, Scheduled Castes or BCs are there and so on. It is a sad commentary on the functioning of the press that to predict the election results they are basing their calculations on caste. One of these days I was surprised to come across, in the columns of a leading national newspaper, an item, "Tiger bites a Brahmin boy". "Tiger bites a Brahmin", as it the tiger know whether that boy was a Brahmin, a Harijan, a Muslim or so on. Tiger bites Sivaji or Upendra or somebody else. But here it was "Tiger bites a Brahmin boy", and it was a box item in the newspaper.

3.00P.M.

This is mentioned as if the tiger knows that the victim is a Brahmin or a Harijan. It is not good, and it is not desirable.

I would like to add that everyday, day in and day out, all newspapers criticise politicians, political parties and each and everybody else. They say that all the politicians are dividing the country into various compartments etc. etc., but, at the same time, the newspapers are behaving worse than the politicans. They are compartmentalising, dividing. The country into several parts. We are having regional newspapers. They came down to a very low level. One of our Ministers in Andhra Pradesh came across a newspaper at home. That fellow resides in Begampeta. His photograph was there, and his statement was there. He was very happy. He went to the State Secretariat.

He told his PAs and others that such and such a newspaper was good enough and that it had published the news item about him with his photograph etc. etc. in colour on the first page. His PA said, "No, Sir. I did not come across it." So, they bought a newspaper from the Secretariat and looked into it. The news item was missing in it because Hyderabad was divided into six or seven zones. It is compartmentalised. The news about one zone is not carried in the newspaper of another zone. That is a sad part. The news of Vijayawada will not cross the River Krishna which is hardly five miles or six miles away. So, the newspapers are dividing the country into various compartments. In the parliamentary debate also, if some hooliganism takes place or if some unparliamentary language is uttered, it comes in the newspapers, but if somebody speaks on a policy or an alternative procedure etc. etc., nothing is found in the newspapers. His name is not found even among the names of those who also spoke.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : You conclude, Dr. Sivaji. Your time was only three minutes. You have consumed more than seven minutes.

DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI : While concluding, I would like to say that there should be complete freedom of expression. I do admit it.

We must address ourselves to what went wrong in the recent past. During the freedom struggle the printout of various newspapers was running into less than 1,000 or 1,500 or so, but they inspired lakhs and lakhs of people in this country. Nowadays we are having newspapers with a print-out of five lakhs or ten lakhs or fifteen lakhs. In spite of these print-out figures, all these figures for A, B, and C, no newspaper is good enough to motivate the people or to give a direction to the society, and they also have reached a stage when people say that such and such a newspaper quoted like this, and nobody is talking a serious note of the writings and reports in the newspapers. So, I hope that the Press Council will adress itself to this and see that the correspondents have proper etiquette.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : Kindly conclude now.

DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI : Just like other professionals in the society like lawyers, doctors, chartered accountants etc. etc., journalists as well as newspapers should have professional etiquette, conduct etc. I hope our journalist friends will not misunderstand me.

Thank you, Madam.

SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV (Maharashtra) : Madam Vice-Chairman, I rise to support this Bill. This is a very small Bill actually, but I feel it is a very important Bill.

The main aspect of this Bill is further to amend the Press Council Act of 1978. They have made three categories—big newspapers with a total circulation of all editions exceeding 50,000 copies of each issue; medium newspapers with a total circulation of all editions exceeding 15,000 copies but not exceeding 50,000 copies; and small newspapers with a total circulation of all the editions not exceeding 15,000 copies of each issue. These are the three categories which have been provided for by this small Bill, the Press Council (Amendment) Bill.

Madam, I would like to support this Bill wholehartedly. I am also running a small newspaper, a weekly, for the last ten years in my district. To your surprise during the last decade there was a mushroom growth of newspapers.

In my district alone there are more than 200 small and big newspapers. I do not know how many are running and how many have closed down, but they have taken more than 200 titles in one district

alone. If you take the figures of all over Maharashtra, you will find thousands of newspapers there. I agree with my hon. friend, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel and some others that some take titles to get newsprint quota to sell it in the blackmarket. Such activities in the name of the freedom of the press are hazardous in nature. Of course, the Press is one of the important organs of our democracy and we should wholeheartedly support it, but this freedom should be enjoyed totally for the welfare of the people and that it should not be hazardous to the general interests of the people. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to find how many people have taken the titles in the last five years and how many papers are actually working and how much newsprint quota has been released to them and how it has been made use of.

Among the big newspapers, there is also discrimination. In Maharashtra there are a large number of newspapers. Some people get advertisements at high rates, while some others complain that they do not get. It is because they do not form part of the Government list of the papers for the purpose. It is said that those who have got influence get themselves enlisted. There should be a verification so that only the real papers get the benefit of the Government advertisements.

Some influential persons maybe in politics or in other fields, or industrialists, run big newspapers for their own benefit. Of course, it is the fundamental right of every one to get the benefit of the freedom of the press, but they should not take away the other man's right. I must have my own right, but I have no right to take away the other man's right. I must press should be in such a way that it contributes to the welfare of the society. If you open up newspapers, mostly you will find that there is defamation of one or the other person. Once that defamation is made, the aggrived party will go to the court of law. Firstly it is very difficult to prove it. If at all the newspaper has been found guilty, that news will find its place in such a way that nobody would take notice.

The DAVP gives Government advertisements to newspapers. My experience is that some of the newspapers frequently get the Government advertisements while a large number of others, particularly in the rural areas, do not get any. Newspaper is one of the important organs to teach the basic values of democracy. It tells what is going on in the society and in the country and the people learn so many things from the newspapers. So, it should be seen that the papers do not publish exaggerated stories with evil intentions. To curb that some legislation should be brought here.

Apart from the dailies, there are a large number of weeklies and monthlies that are published in the country. They too play a very important part in the press. They give very useful information. But there too there is discrimination in the matter of advertisements. The number of weeklies and monthlies is more than the number of dailies. So, they should be encouraged. So weeklies also should be encouraged. I remember in Maharashtra a monthly magazine called "Kirloskar" is being published for the last 75 years. It is the only monthly magazine in Maharashtra which give wide news in the rural areas. It gives news from literature to politics and other things also. So monthlies and and weeklies should be given all support by the Government so that people can derive benefit out of it.

So far as small newspapers are concerned, some people really want to do a very good job. They want to run these small newspapers effectively. But they have some financial constraints. They do not have their own printing press. They want to set up a printing press. But banks do not give financial assistance to them in time. When the younger generation who want to start newspapers in the form of weeklies or dailies and go to the banks or to the financial institutions for loans, they should be given adequate finance, as early as possible, so that they can set up

their own press. They will definitely publish good literature and give wide news to the people.

The other important aspect which I want to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister is about a large number of reporters working in the medium newspapers. They are doing a good job in the rural areas. They cannot come to Delhi to cover the proceedings of the Parliament. They do not get railway passes or passes from the State Transport Authority to travel in buses in the States. There are reporters from big newspapers who are covering proceedings in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha but there are no reporters from medium newspapers. You have categorised one paper as a medium newspaper and another newspaper as a big newspaper. Reporters working in the medium newspapers must get railway passes and bus passes within the State. That aspect should be considered by the Minister.

So far as small newspapers are concerned, you should select at least 10 to 15 people from each district to run small newspapers. Reporters working in small newspapers also should be given railway passes and bus passes. The small newspapers are the only newspapers which can report recent happenings in the country and give the same to the lower strata of the society and remote areas and villages. They should be given this encouragement.

Another important aspect is about advertisements and newsprint quota. Some people are misusing newsprint quota. A large number of newspapers are not getting newsprint quota at all. They are purchasing newsprint from the open market. The news agencies are selling their surplus newsprint quota in black market. These small newspaper owners are purchasing the newsprint from them for publishing their papers. When you clear the title of the newspaper, some specific newsprint quota should be released to such newspapers by the Registrar of the Newspapers of India so that small newspapers can also get adequate newsprint quota and publish their newspapers regularly.

Another point is that small newspapers which are working at the block level and district level should be encouraged. It is easy to run a newspaper in New Delhi. It is very easy to run a newspaper in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and other metropolitan cities. If people who are working at the block level want to set up small newspapers at the block level, they should be encouraged. Newspapers published at the block level go to different parts of the villages.

Now literacy percentage is growing up very fast. In the State of Maharashtra, the literacy percentage is more than 65. When block level newspapers come up in the morning, people in my State say that Godachin Samachar has come, Lok Patra has come, Lokmat has come, Maharashtra Times has come. Nowadays people are fond of newspapers. They want to read them to know about the recent happenings in the country and outside also. Madam, you will be surprised to know that farmers in rural areas know about what the GATT Agreement is and what the Dunkel Draft is and how it is going to affect our agriculture. These small newspapers are the real news agencies which are carrying information from the national level to the rural level or to the lower strata of the society. So it is very essential that we must strengthen the small newspapers, weeklies and to some extent monthlies also. Of course, the daily newspapers are medium and big newspapers but the weeklies and the magazines are the small news agencies which are really serving the country. I am glad that the Minister has classified the newspapers into three categories—big newspaper, medium newspaper and small newspaper—depending upon its circulation. If the total circulation of all its editions does not exceed fifteen thousand copies for each issue, then it is termed as small newspaper. If the total circulation of all its editions exceeds fifteen thousand copies but does not exceed fifty thousand copies for each issue, it is called medium newspaper and if the total circulation of all its editions fifty thousand copies for each issue, it is

called big newspaper. But there should be no discrimination in releasing the advertisements in respect of big, medium and small newspapers and all the people who are really working in the newspaper industry, should get the real benefit. They must get the latest news at the national level, at the State level and at the district level and they must pass on that information to the lowest layer of the society. If these things happen, the Press Council legislation and the freedom of press would be totally successful. With these words, I support the Bill.

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय (उत्तर प्रदेश)। माननीया उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, आपने मुझे बोलने का अवसर दिया इसके लिए बहुत धन्यवाद। यह जो प्रैस परिषद् (संशोधन) विधेयक है, इसका तो मैं समर्थन करता हूं, लेकिन इसके संबंध में जो शंका है उसकी मैं बाद में चर्चा करूंगा, लेकिन इस विधेयक के माध्यम से जो प्रैस परिषद् की कार्य प्रणाली है और भारत का जो प्रैस है और यह जो प्रैस परिषद् विधेयक इसके कार्यकरण पर चर्चा करने का अवसर प्राप्त हो रहा है, आप जानती हैं कि प्रैस का बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण भाग हमारे देश की आजादी की लड़ाई में भी था और उस समय जब इतने ध्वनि विस्तारक यंत्र नहीं थे दूरदर्शन नहीं था, तथा हमारी आजादी की लड़ाई के बड़े-बड़े योद्धाओं ने प्रैस के माध्यम से ही गांव-गांव तक लोगों को पहुंचाने की कोशिश किया और इस कड़ी में मैं राष्ट्रपिता महात्मा गांधी जो "हरिजन" और "यंग इंडिया" निकाला करते थे, महामना मदन मोहन मालवीय स्वयं हिन्दुस्तान के संपादक थे और अभ्युदय के संपादक थे, लोकमान्य बाल गंगाधर तिलक जिनका समाचार पत्र केसरी था, जो जब्त भी हुआ था और उत्तर प्रदेश के गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी जिनका समाचार था "प्रताप" और राजा जी स्वयं और आपके लोकनायक जय प्रकाश नारायण, जवाहर लाल जी नेहरू का नेशनल हेरल्ड अखबार था उसमें जवाहर लाल जी के हस्ताक्षर से ही छपा करता था कि

Freedom is in peril. Defend it with all your might.

आजादी खतरों में है, पूरी ताकत के साथ इसकी रक्षा करो और इस देश में बहुत बड़े-बड़े संपादक हुए हैं श्री सी. वाई. चिंतामणि चेलापति राव अदि-अदि और उसी के बाद शायद यही कारण था कि हमारा संविधान बना तो उसमें जहां और बहुत सी नागरिक आजादी लोगों को दी गई तो संविधान के अनुच्छेद 19 में इस बात का उच्चारण दिया गया।

All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression.

इस एक्सप्रैशन के माध्यम से हम प्रैस के जरिए देश को जहां हमने आजादी दिलाने का काम किया, वही आज देश के निर्माण के कार्य में भी प्रैस का बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण योगदान है। जैसा कि कहा गया है प्रैस हमारे संसदीय लोकतंत्र का एक बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण यानी चौथा अंग है। उसको साम्राज्य तो मैं नहीं कहूंगा फोर्थ स्टेट क्योंकि अब साम्राज्य समाप्त हो चुका है लेकिन जहां एक ओर संसद् है, विधान मंडल हैं, न्यायपालिका है और कार्यकारिणी है वही हमारे देश का एक बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण अंग प्रैस है। किसी ने कहा भी है कि प्रैस में जो तलवार है उससे भी अधिक ताकत है यानी

Pen is mightier than sword.

और बहुत से ऐसे कांड, जैसे भागलपुर का कांड था जिनको जानकारी संसद् के सदस्यों को प्रैस के माध्यम से हुई और प्रैस को पढ़ करके सांसदों ने उस कांड को संसद के अंदर उठाया और उस पर कार्यवाही भी हुई। ऐसे कितने ही कांड हैं, लेकिन यह दुख का विषय है कि यह जो प्रैस कौंसिल एक्ट, 1965 बना था और उसी के अंतर्गत जब 1966 में प्रैस कौंसिल आफ् इंडिया का गठन हुआ तो आपातकाल के आते-आते 1 जनवरी, 1976 को तत्कालीन सरकार ने प्रैस कौंसिल का विघटन कर दिया और न केवल प्रैस कौंसिल का विघटन किया बल्कि जो हमारी प्रैस की आजादी थी उसको भी छीनने का काम किया। लेकिन बाद में जब जनता पार्टी की सरकार आई तो उस समय फिर प्रैस कौंसिल का गठन हुआ। और आज जो प्रैस कौंसिल एक्ट है, जिस पर संशोधन आया है, 1978 का ही बना हुआ है। जवाहर लाल जी स्वयं प्रेस की आजादी के बहुत

बड़े हिमायती थे। उन्होंने यहां तक कह रखा था कि-- ·

"I would rather have a completely free press with all dangers in the wrong use of that freedom, than a supressed or regulated press."

तो, उपाध्यक्ष महोदया, मुझे पूरी उम्मीद है कि जो वर्तमान सरकार है वह प्रेस की आजादी पर किसी भी प्रकार का अतिक्रमण नहीं करेगी। प्रेस कौंसिल ने हाल में, जो प्रेस कौंसिल के अध्यक्ष है, उन्होंने इस बात का सुझाव दिया है, जस्टिस सरकारिया ने, कि हमारी चूंकि खुली गवर्नमेंट है, ओपन गवर्नमेंट है इसलिए जो आफिशियल सीक्रट एक्ट है इसको रिपील कर देना चाहिए। मैं इस संबंध में जरूर चाहूंगा कि अब मंत्री जी अपना उत्तर दें तो इस बारे में हमें जानकारी कराने की कृपा करें। अकसर ऐसा होता है कि सार्वजनिक हित में कई चीज की, उसे आफिसियल सीक्रट कहकर, जानकारी न केवल आम जनता को बल्कि सांसदों तक को भी नहीं कराई जाती।

अभी हाल में कलकत्ता में एक कान्फ्रेन्स हुई थी 15 सितंबर, 1993 को, वहां पर जस्टिस सरकारिया गए थे, वहां से उनका उद्धरण मैं आपके सामने करना चाहूंगा क्योंकि जस्टिस सरकारिया स्वयं प्रेस कौंसिल के अध्यक्ष भी है--

"Mr. Justice R. S. Sarkaria, Chairman of the Press Council of India, feels that since the country is committed to an open government, the antiquated Official Secrets Act and other allied provisions need to be repealed and replaced by more liberal provisions, in keeping with Article 19(1)(a) of the Counstitution which guarantees the right to freedom of speech and expression."

"Mr. Justice Sarkaria, who today addressed a journalism congress, organised by the Department of Journalism, Calcutta University, believes that in order to guarantee freedom of access to information, it will be useful to adopt, with necessary changes and adaptations to suit the Indian conditions, those provisions of the British Official Secrets Act, 1989, which represent a substantial advance towards an open Government."

महोदया, यह जो जस्टिस सरकारिया की राय है, उससे मैं सहमत हूं, उसका मैं समर्थन करता हूं और निश्चित रूप से इस संबंध में मैं सरकार की राय जानना चाहता हूं।

महोदया, यहां पर पीत-पत्रकारिता की भी चर्चा की गई। यह सही बात है कि हमारी जो जर्नलिज्म है, वह उच्च कोटि की है, लेकिन फिर भी कभी कभी पत्रकारिता की ओर से, समाचार पत्रों की ओर से ब्लकमैलिंग होती है। इसका शायद एक कारण यह भी हो सकता है कि देश के जो बड़े औद्योगिक घराने हैं, इस देश के उच्च स्तरीय औद्योगिक घराने हैं, वह किसी न किसी डेली न्यूज पेपर से, चाहे हिन्दी के है या अंग्रेजी के उनसे, जुड़े हैं, उनका नियंत्रण वह करते हैं। मैं चाहूंगा कि मंत्री जी जब उत्तर दें तो इस संबंध में भी चर्चा करेंगे कि जो बछावत बोर्ड की संस्तुतियां थीं, उनको लागू करने के संबंध में सरकार की ओर से क्या कार्यवाही की गई है ?

महोदया, इस संशोधन के संबंध में मुझे जो आशंका है, मैं उसको अभी से व्यक्त किए देता हूं। जैसा कि इसके उद्देश्य और कारणों में बताया गया है कि अभी कौनसे समाचार पत्र बड़े हैं, मध्यम हैं या छोटे हैं। इसके सिलसिले में जो हमारा विधेयक है, इसमें इस बात की चर्चा की गई थी कि जो बड़े समाचार पत्र हैं उनका परिचालन 50,000 से अधिक होना चाहिए, जो मध्यम हैं उनका 15,000 से 50,000 के बीच होना चाहिए और जो छोटे समाचार पत्र हैं उनका परिचालन 15,000 से कम होना चाहिए। अब जो सरकार की ओर से संशोधन आया है उसमें इस अधिकार को सरकार ले रही है और सरकार यह कह रही है कि जो सरकारी गजट है, उसको हम प्रकाशित करते हैं, उसको सरकार तय करेगी। तो कभी कभी ऐसी धाराओं और ऐसे जो कानून हैं उनके दुरुपयोग की भी आशंका रहती है। मेरे मन में यह आशंका है और इसलिए मैंने इस संबंध में एक संशोधन भी दिया है। जब मैं अपना संशोधन रखूंगा तब इस पर भी चर्चा करूंगा और मंत्री जी का जवाब चाहूंगा।

SHRI J. S. RAJU (Tamil Nadu) : Madam, as far as the amendment is concerned, I welcome it because the circulation of newspapers has gone up manifold and it is not possible to come up with an amending Bill each time for re-categorisation. I only want to tell the hon. Minister that this provision should not be misused by the officials for inclusion of members into and exclusion of members from the Press Council to suit their whims and fancies.

Having said this, I have a few words for the consideration of the hon. Minister. There is the office of the Registrar of Newspapers of India in New Delhi. This is the office which approves titles for newspapers and magazines of all languages througout the country. Therefore, people who want to publish new newspapers, weeklies and monthlies from far-off places like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and North-East have to apply to the Registrar of Newspapers through post. But I am sorry to say that people have to come and wait at the entrance of this title-clearance office for days. This is because a bascially wrong system is followed for giving approval to titles.

I don't know if the Minister is aware of this. For getting a title approved by R.N.I. one has to indicate a few choices of titles and send it through the magistrate of the area from where the magazine will be published. Then the R.N.I. will check the catalogue of titles they have and if the suggested title is not already registered, that title will be cleared. This is the established procedure. But what actually happens is not in keeping with the spirit of the procedure. Whenever the R.N.I. office receives a letter for title clearance, they reject it saying that the suggested titles have been already registered or blocked. The disappointed people come to Delhi and wait at the entrance of the office for days without being able to know anything because any title they suggest is rejected. The influential people manage to get the titles cleared without problems. Others are put to such hardships that most people give up the idea of publishing magazines. Some of them understand the motive behind this harassment and do the needful and get the desired title approved. The title which was refused is given after certain demands are met. I don't want to elaborate this point. But with full responsibility, I say that the integriy of the title-approving office of R.N.I. has been eroded to unimaginable limits. I have a suggestion to undo this.

Now, over one-and-a-half lak titles are registered with R.N.I. These titles are held secret and only the officials in the office check the list and say "No" to the person waiting for a title. I don't find any reason for keeping these titles a top secret. After all, these titles are registered and many titles are known because of their circulation. If the catalogue of tiltes is made public, those who want to start a new magazine can have a look at the catalogue and suggest a title which is not there. This can be the easiest way. The R.N.I. office can publish a catalogue of titles like the telephone directory and place it at the R.N.I. office and also at the information offices of the States and Union Territories. This will also remove the band name brought to the R.N.I. office and the Ministry.

I think the catalogue of titles is kept confidential only with an ulterior motive; otherwise, it is not a defence document to be kept secret.

I also request the Minister not to keep officials for more than two years in that office. Some officials have been staying on for several years and that too on deputation. Some have got many extensions.

I know about the cases of several persons from Tamil Nadu who could not get titles cleared because they could not meet the demands in Delhi. If the hon. Minister wants I can even send him individual cases. But he should assure that the officials will not torture them by asking them to suspended publication on flimsy grounds. With these words, I conclude.

SHRI N. GIRI PRASAD (Andhra Pradesh) : Madam, first of all, I am not clear why this amendment has been brought by the Minister. Previously there were certain norms for classification of newspapers, say, newspapers with a circulation of below 15000 are small newspapers, newspapers with a circulation up to 50,000 are medium newspapers and newspapers with a circulation above 50,000 are large newspapers. Now the Government wants to decide for itself which is a big newspaper and which is a small newspaper. What were the difficulties faced by the Government in regard to the above fixation ? What is the advantage the Government is going get by changing the method of classification with regard to the circulation ? I would like the Minister to explain this point.

We are in the days of freedom of the Press. Everybody knows that Press occupies a very important place not only in spreading news but in opinion-making process also. Most of the people, those who can read, not only read news but they read views also. As far as the Press is concerned, it is the most important vehicle to spread views in addition to spreading news. When the Press is controlled by various interest, including business interest, naturally their views will be reflected in it. How to reorganise or reorient the Press, to make it more amenable to public opinion, I don't want to make any lecture on this. The Press Council also has to make efforts in order to reorient and reorganise the Press. As some of the hon. Members have said, the Press should give up the drive of sensationalism. This is perhaps necessary for them to increase the circulation. But when it goes beyond the truth and spreads false news, it gives distorted opinion to the people.

After the earthquake in Maharashtra, different newspapers gave different figures about deaths. They gave the news that about 30 to 40,000 people died. They do these things in order to increase their circulation. Ultimately the truth came out.

Similarly, in regard to reporting a major forum like Parliament, the Press is giving the most distorted exposure. They have got certain areas where they are interested. They are interested in Question Hour. They are interested in Zero Hour and in major Government policies. But many debates take place in this House and in the other House. But these are not reported in the Press. I would like to advise the Press Council or people who are concerned with it to follow the same procedure as adopted by All India Radio and Doordarshan. At least, they mention that these are the items which came up before the Parliament and these are the persons who participated in the debates. If they want to give some weightage to any news, they can do it. I have no objection to that. But they completely black out some names and discussions. Though this is one of the most important forums in our public life, still this view is also not carried to the people in an appreciable manner. They are giving many other things. What is the difference between Special Mentions and Zero Hour ? Madam Vice-Chairman, please consider it. You have got your own experience. Matters raised during Zero Hour are given the highest priority, which is outside the rules. But Special Mentions are put under the carpet by everyone, except a Minister replying to the points after one month or two months.

But the people outside know that these are the people who speak during the Zero Hour, who shout and they are the people who contribute to the noise in the Parliament. Other people are just useless. They sit there to get their DA and other things. This is the impression the press gives. It is neither good for the press nor for the representatives of the people. Everybody is doing something according to his capacity and aptitude. It also depends upon the Chairman who is the custodian of the House to see that proper reporting is done. My last submission. These are days of competition. The big papers have got commercial value

and they get commercial advertisements. In addition to that Government also patronizes them. But there are small papers which are coming up in large numbers. They may survive or they may not survive. Most of them may not survive. But as literacy grows and people's living standards grow, people are able to buy newspapers and naturally, the circulation of papers is bound to increase. Newspapers will have to come in. The Government must at least help these small newspapers and medium type of newspapers by patronizing them by giving some advertisements. I am not asking for many concessions. If the small papers cannot survive on their own, let it be so. But the Government should not be a party to killing them by helping the big papers. Of course, everybody reads the major papers. There is no doubt about it. I request the Minister to give some thought to it at least in terms of giving some advertisements. See that the small papers are not killed because of lack of patronage by the Government. Thank you.

PROF. SAURIN BHATTACHARYA (West Bengal) : Madam Vice-Chairman, the Bill itself is a non-controversial one. Government takes into its hands the responsibility for determining from time to time, big newspapers, medium newspapers and small newspapers. It covers only a portion of the Press Council. The Press Council is a body which is supposed to be a watchdog to ensure that the freedom of the press is not trampled by the powers that be for the time being and at the same time it is also their responsibility to see to it that the press functions according to certain norms. Whether there should be a cut and dry code for newspapers to be framed by the Press Council or by the Government is out of question. Even the Press Council which is a nominated body, perhaps, cannot perform this task. The question of making it more democratic may be considered by the Government. It is not under the purview of this Bill, no doubt. But perhaps, the time has come when a fresh look has to be taken into the entire composition of the Press Council and to give it some teeth. Now, at present, the Press Council is just, at best, a moral authority. Nothing more than that. It may pontificate, but it cannot take any action against any for violating this or that norm. It cannot take any step against the powers that be which infringe upon that freedom. Press freedom is a thing which we all cherish. Like individual freedom, like civil liberties, press freedom is also part of the civil liberties of the citizens of the country.

But, we know, particularly, the big and medium newspapers, like big and medium peasants, represent vested interests and the journalists have to be at the beck and call of their masters in the last analysis, however much of independence they try to show. Therefore, we see that many renowned journalists and columnists have to move from Press to Press not only for money but also for the whims of their masters. And this Bill does not change the pattern of ownership and, here, we are concerned with the representation of owners who have about 20 per cent representation on the Press Council if the number of its members is 28. I would request the Minister, while supporting the proposal that he has brought forward, to pay attention to the wider question of Press freedom. If you call yellow journalism, take steps against yellow journalism; but who will determine that, unless and until it is a body like the Press Council which is composed democratically and which has some teeth in it ? In order to take steps against these things, I hope the Minister will take courage into both hands and try to deal with these things because to take a step affecting the Press management is not a very easy task; the Ministers are very much open to some problems created from the side of the big Press. And I do support fully the points made by Mr. Giri Prasad in the concluding portion of his speech that we should patronise small newspapers, not denying big newspapers their mini-

mum dues, where at the same time, it should be our endeavour, therein, to ensure the freedom of the press people, reporters, special correspondents, etc. and not of the owners who dominate and who would be pontificating to the people at large in the name of either investigative journalism or some other thing.

Thank you.

SHRI P. UPENDRA (Andhra Pradesh) : Madam Vice-Chairman, there is not much to dispute in this Bill. It is a very simple Bill. But I take this opportunity to throw some points or the consideration of the Hon. Minister. The first thing is, he is taking powers, to categorise the newspapers into big, medium and small, through executive orders instead of amending the Act every time. But I must also say that there is no proper mechanism to check the circulation of newspapers. Though the ABC is there, yet from the Government side, there is no mechanism. Neither the Registrar of Newspapers, who give quotas for newsprint nor the DAVP who gives advertisements on the basis of classification, has any powers; even if they have the powers, they don't have the mechanism to check the circulation. Unless this lapse is checked, all these figures mentioned will be irrelevant. The second point which I would like to mention is that there is proliteration of newspapers, particularly, in the name of small newspapers, which the other speakers have also mentioned. In every small town, you find dozens of newspapers, single-sheet papers, surviving mostly on blackmail or by blackmarketing of the newsprint or some local tender notices, etc.

And, Madam, if anybody refuses to give advertisements or money, they scandalize. There must be some mechanism to curb these things. I tried to do it in 1990 by calling the representatives of the Association of Small Newspapers. But they said that the Government could do it. They said, "We agree that there are such papers and they should be proceeded against.". I insisted on self-regulation and I said, "You show those papers which are supposed to be bogus newspapers and which are taking the newsprint and selling it in the blackmarket and which are indulging in blackmarketing and blackmailing also.". But they did not take that responsibility. But we should evolve a mechanism to weed out such undesirable papers, the so-called papers. For example, Guwahati is a small town and it has 21 daily newspapers. Even big cities do not have that much. But these are well produced though their circulation may be less. We can understand that. But in many small towns you find all these rags going in the name of newspapers and for that also, what mechanism we have to evolve has to be considered. There are many organizations of these small and medium newspapers. There are three or four organizations competing with each other and every organization claims that it is the representative of the small or medium newspapers and we do not know their authenticity and their bonafides. That also we will have to go into.

The next point which many speakers have mentioned is that the Press Council today is toothless; no doubt about it. Definitely it is so. We have to make it more effective. Today, this amendment comes into conflict with the functioning of the Press Council itself because the Press Council is to sit in judgment over complaints relating to what has been published in the newspapers. Now, you are given representation in the Press Council to the owners of the newspapers. And why should we have such an unwieldy Press Council which cannot effectively deal with situations that arise ? Also, there are no powers to the Press Council to compel the newspapers to come before them when they are called. There were instances in 1991 and in other years also when the papers refused to appear before the Press Council when called. Further, what is the sanctity of the censure given by the Press Council ? It censures sometimes the newspapers for any tendentious

reporting or for any wrong done to any individual or society or any organization. After that, what is it ? Even that paper does not publish that it has been censured and so on. Only the other paper publish it. Can't we compel them to say that such and such a news item was wrongly published by the papers and that they apologize or that they have been censured by the Press Council ? For that there is no provision in the Act.

Also, it is like an Ombudsman. The Press Council was originally contemplated as an Ombudsman on the functioning of the newspapers. But now the newspapers are going out to pick up some eminent judges. The "Times of India" has chosen a former Chief Justice of India as its Ombudsman there we are bringing in the newspaper proprietors into the Ombudsman system. This is a contradiction. Therefore, these points have to be regulated and corrected.

I wish the Minister had brought forward a comprehensive Bill. This is a small amendment. I still hope that he will convene a meeting of all the newspaper editors, journalists' organizations, eminent journalists, media experts, etc. and evolve a very good Bill which will make the Press Council really effective in its functioning. Thank you.

SHRI W. KULABIDHU SINGH (Manipur) : Thank you, Madam, for giving me time to speak on this Bill. I am aware that my time is very limited. But I want to make only two points.

Many of my friends have expressed the opinion that they are not clear about the purpose and objective of this amendment. But I am very clear about the purpose and objective of the Government in bringing forward this amending Bill. Now, under the original Act of 1978, the categorisation of newspapers is based on the circulation figures of the newspapers.

A circulation of 50,000 and above means a big newspapers, between 15,000 and 50,000 means medium newspaper, and below 15,000 means a small newspaper. I think, this categorisation has relevancy with the Government's advertisement policy on the one hand, and the allocation of newsprint quota on the other. All of us are aware and nobody can gainsay that All India Radio and Doordarshan are under the absolute control of the Government of India and the Governments of the respective States. Now they are under the Government's absolute control. Only the print media is independent in the coutry. So, the Government likes to have an absolute control over the print media also, over and above All India Radio and Doordarshan. So, this is a very sinister motive with which the Government has brought this Amendment Bill o replace the original Explanation under clause (3) of Section 5. Now, this categorisation of big, medium and small newspapers is on the subjective satisfaction of the Government, not on the objective consideration of the newspaper's circulation. On the subjective satisfaction of the Government, the categorisation is going to take place under the present Amendment. This is very objectionable. The freedom of the press will be curbed.

Madam, in the Statement of Objects and Reasons, the Hon. Information and Broadcasting Minister has said that this amendment is for the preservation of the freedom of the press and improvement of standards of the press and journalism and other news agencies. It is written in the Statement of Objects and Reasons. But the motive is otherwise, it is just the reverse. So, I strongly oppose this Bill. This is an unnecessary Bill. It is a wrong step. It is for curbing the independence of the print media. Not merely the Radio and Doordarshan, but the print media is also attempted to be curbed now. So, I strongly object to the purpose of this Bill. This will curtail freedom of the press and everything that the democratic structure and democraic polity stands for. As some Hon. Members have said, Press is the fourth estate. In the

United Kingdom from where we have imitated our parliamentary democracy, the King, the House of Lords, the Commons, and the Press, win the fourth estate. These four wings are part of the governance of the country. Now, through this Amendment, the Government wants to bring this fourth estate also under their control. Therefore, I strongly oppose this Bill.

With these few words, I thank you again, Madam.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : Now, the Hon. Minister will reply.

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO : Thank you, Madam Vice-Chairperson. First of all, Madam, I would like to thank the Hon. Members who have participated for their very valuable suggestions and their erudite contribution. Although this is a very small Bill which had been brought to this House by my distinguished predecessor more than one year back, I will have to move an amendment because it was introduced in 1992 and now it is the end of 1993. One year has elapsed and...

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM (Andhra Pradesh) : Why don't you name your predecessor ?

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO : Mr. Ajit Kumar Panja. I thought you knew it.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM : I thought you were referring to Mr. Upendra.

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO : He was also a distinguished predecessor. I have great respect and regard for him.

So, it is not something that we have just brought in a hurry or in haste. It has been lying in the House for the last more than a year. And I seem to be fortunate that in spite being in the order paper for about a week, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister thought it fit to get it debated today. As I was saying, I am very grateful to the valuable suggestions, and I have already stated in my opening remarks the intentions and the reasons for bringing this Amendment Bill.

It has given us a very valuable feedback about some of the things which have been happening or which ought not to happen. I welcome the criticism since it is very very constructive and I accept it and would like to respond in letter and spirit to the views expressed by the hon. Members here. In fact, I am extremely grateful because they have stated it very candidly with the intention that we must improve because it is extremely important for the functioning of democracy and the democratic institutions. I would just go with the Bill itself.

There are only two things which are sought to be amended. In 1978, the Bill was passed here. It has not been amended at all. As far as a comprehensive legislation is concerned, we shall definitely consider it as suggested by the Hon. Members. It will not be out of place to mention that in the Consultative Committee of Parliament attached to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, already a sub-committee has been set up under the Chairmanship of Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan who will be interacting with the media. They will also be interacting with the Press Council of India because many of the hon. Members felt that the whole information and media policy needs to be looked into in its totality, especially according to the Indian conditions, Indian ethos, Indian character and Indian personality, and this is exactly what we are seeking to do. They shall be starting functioning very soon and within six months' time they will be reporting back. We shall then definitely come back to the House. They will be interacting with the media throughout the country, including the small and medium newspapers over which the hon. Members have laid so much stress.

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : आप अनुरोध करेंगे तो मालवीय जी अपना अमेंडमेंट वापस ले लेंगे।

श्री के०पी० सिंहदेव : मैं अनुरोध करूंगा।

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : मैं लोगों को प्रेस नहीं करूंगा।

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO : As I mentioned, some of the State Governments like Maharashtra and others have started giving certain concessions as well as facilities to the small and the medium newspapers. As the hon. Members have mentioned, there is a mushroom growth of newspapers in the country, specially the small and the medium ones. I will just give you the figures which will give an indication of the phenomenal growth of 400 per cent from 1956. The number of newspapers on 13-12-56 was 1133 in English and 1254 in Hindi and others were 1183. The total was 4570. Their circulation was 24,74,000 in English, 22,20,000 in Hindi and in case of others, it was 62,58,000, and this comes to 1,09,52,000. On 31-12-1990, the number of newspapers in English was 4,777.

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Hindi—9,695; Others—14,019. This makes up a total of 28,491. The circulation is : 72,13,000 in English; 1,91,50,000 in Hindi and Others—2,67,97,000. This makes up a total of 5,31,60,000. Thus, there is an increase of 400 per cent in the number of newspapers and an increase of 500 per cent in circulation.

It is with the intention of helping the growth of small and medium newspapers that a number of facilities have been extended. As I said, the circulation is on the increase. As Members said, literacy is on the increase because there is a desire to read more. Information is power. Education is power. If we wish to achieve socialism or develop or make it accessible to a large number of people, we must equip them properly and make information and education more accessible to the people to which the present Government is committed. That is why we have the total literacy mission. We have a vast network of A.I.R. and Doordarshan stations, the P.I.B. and the D.A.V.P., all joined together to spread the network to the far and wide corners including the tribal areas, hilly areas, the North-Eastern Region and other remote areas so that accessibility to services is to the benefit of the small and medium newspapers who do not have the wherewithal or the facilities or the resources which are available to the big newspapers.

Madam, in 1989, on the 1st April, 1989,—which is the beginning of a financial year and not All Foods Day—it was decided to change the classification of small, medium and big newspapers. Before this, the classification was : below 15,000—small; 15,000 to 50,000—medium and above 50,000—big. On 1st April, 1989, it was decided that small would be up to 25,000; between 25,000 and 75,000 would be medium and above 75,000 would be big. Therefore, there would be more number of newspapers who would be benefited by the facilities which are meant for them, which are extended both by the Central as well as State Governments.

I would now come to some of the facilities being offered to the small and medium newspapers so that those hon. Members who do have some apprehension would not have that. Here, I would also request Mr. Malaviya to have a rethinking on his amendment after I have given the explanation.

SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA : I am yet to move it.

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO : I want you to reconsider it because I am responding to you.

SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA : I will not move it.

SHRI P. UPENDRA : You need not waste the time of the House.

SHRI K P. SINGH DEO : These are the facilities extended to small and

medium newspapers by various media units of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Facilities extended by the Press Information Bureau—Newspapers : The Press Information Bureau, in pursuance of its policy of providing more and more services to the small and medium newspapers, gives a number of special facilities to them. Besides making available its general services such as news releases and features, it has been supplying other types of news services such as ebonoid blocks (for Urdu papers only) and illustrated photo features. News Services : A number of services tailored to the needs of small papers have been introduced. Indepth stories written in simple and capsule form covering developments in various spheres such as science, economic growth, agriculture, health and family welfare are prepared and supplied to them in all major languages of the country. Photo Services : The Bureau also supplies illustrated photo features and ebonoid blocks to small papers. The Charba services, which consist of zinc block for use in Urdu litho print, have become quite popular. Special Services Cell : The Bureau has set up a special service cell at their headquarters office with representatives in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The Cell is entrusted with the task of preparing filed-based development stories and making them available to the language newspapers. The emphasis is on providing locally relevant photographs, cartographs and ebonoid blocks.

Press parties : Organising press parties to various Central Government projects is another important activity of the Bereau which enables representatives of the press to have first-hand knowledge of the developmental activity going on in different parts of the country. Represendtatives of different papers are taken at freqent intervals to selected projects for this type of special study. Language and small and medium papers get representation in these conducted tours.

Accreditation : Accreditation rules have been liberalised to extend greater facilities to small and medium papers. As per rules, only newspapers with a circulation of over 5000 copies are eligible for accreditation. In order, however, to assists the smaller papers, this condition has been relaxed and now two or more small newspapers can jointly seek accreditation for a common correspondent. The rules also provide that special consideration may be shown to newspapers devoted to science and technology and to those published from hilly or backward areas, or from regions that are under-developed in terms of information and communication. The Bureau's mailing list now contains a large number of small and meduim newspapers as well as correspondents accre-securing Government advertisements.

Then I come to facilities extended by Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity.

A newpaper with a minimum paid circulation of 2000 copies is now eligible for securing Government advertisements.

Papers/periodicals published in backward, remote, tribal areas or in tribal languages and meant primarily for tribal readers, are made eligible for securing Government advertisements if their minimum paid circulation is 500 copies. This concession is also available to papers/periodicals published from Jammu and Kashmir State.

Newspapers/periodicals with an uninterrupted publication of four months now become eligible for securing Government advertisements as against the period of six months provided in earlier Advertising Policy.

Newspapers/periodicals with a circulation of 2000 copies have been exempted from submission of Chartered Accountant's certificate.

In the matter of advertisement rates the DAVP rate structure provides an inbuilt weightage for small and medium papers.

As far as news agencies are concerned, during the financial year 1992-93 the

following amounts were paid by Government : Rs. 210 lakhs to the PTI and Rs. 177 lakhs to the UNI. This includes Hindi and Urdu. These amounts were paid for running their various apencies. AIR and Doordarshan also take help and that is the news pool as far as Doordarshan is concerned. Out of this amount Rs. 1.55 lakhs were provided for English, Rs. 95 lakhs for Hindi and upto Rs. 30 lakhs for teleprinter charges. This is for the PTI. The UNI was given Rs. 121 lakhs for English, Rs. 25 lakhs for Hindi, Rs. 25 lakhs for teleprinter and Rs. 6 lakhs for Urdu. For Urdu news agencies we have just sanctioned some money so that they can put in some more teleprinters which they do not have so far. This is specially meant for the benefit of Mohd. Afzal, who is not present today.

Some of the hon. Members mentioned about muzzling of the press and that there is a sinster move that it will be under the control of the Government and all that. Madam, if I give you the list of 29 members in the Press Council, you will see that out of the 29, not a single person is from the Government at all. There is a procedure for selecting the Chairman. "The Chairman shall be a person nominated by a committee consisting of the Chairman, the Conucil of States—the Rajya Saha—the Speaker of the House of the People—the Lok Sabha— and a person elected by memebrs of the Council from amongst themselves." Now, who are the 29 members who make up this Council ? One is the category of Editors. There are six of them. They are nominated by the Editors Guild of India and the All-India Newspapers and Editors Conference. The second category is the working journalists other than Editors. They also number seven. They are nominated by the Indian Federation of Working Journalists, the National Union of Journalists and the Press Association. Then there are six who own or carry on the business of management of newspapers. They are nominated by the Indian Newspapers Society, the Indian Language Newspapers Association, the All-India Small and Medium Newspapers Association and the All-India Small and Medium Newspapers Federation. Then there is a person who manages a news agency, either PTI or UNI. Then, nominee of the University Grants Commission; nominee of the Bar Council of India; nominee of the Sahitya Akademi. Then there are three Members of Parliament from the Lok Sabha and two Members of Parliament from the Rajya Sabha. Therefore, broadbasing this and to exclude people who are owning or running a newspaper, these are the categories—which I have just read out—from which they are.

This amendment seeks that of the six, members who own newspapres or manage newspapers, two will be from the small, two will be from the medium and two will be from the large. I do hope it will satisfy the hon. Members that there is no control of Govenment. It is broadbased. It has people of all shades of opinion including those who manage newspapers. Therefore, Government is committed to the freedom of the press. If I may quote one of the Editors, only three days back the Editor of Pioneer, Mr. Vinod Mehta, who was speaking at the 12th Annual Conference of the Small and Medium Newspapers Conference—where I was also present and the Editor of the Times of India was present—said : "I am a critic of the present Government, but I am happy to state that the present Prime Minister and his Government, in the last two years, have not made any effort, have not moved, to muzzle the press. I think we are happy about it and we hope to this is from a critic of this Government who had this thing to say about the Prime Minister and this Government. Therefore I mayl humbly submit that the apprehension in the minds of the hon. Members that the Government was muzzling the press or anything like that would not be based on facts but it is their own perception.

As far as giving teeth to the Press Council of India is concerned. I don't

think that they are interested to ask the Government for more teeth. But if Government and Parliament in their wisdom would like to give them more teeth—because many Members felt that instead of pontification there should be some punitive action—then I think I would like to go by the sense of the Houses, that is, both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, and I will be too happy to abide by their decision.

Regarding the closure of newspapers which two of the Members had mentioned, the Press Council of India has set up a committee recently regarding the closure of newspapers, and they have also set up a committee to review some of the aspects which have been stated by the hon. Members. That study is not yet over. When the Press Council does receive that copy, I am sure there will be interaction with the Ministry and we will come forward to Parliament so that we can have the combined wisdom of both the Houses. With these words, Madam, I would just like to respond to some of the hon. Members.

The first was Mr. Jagdish Prasad Mathur. He mentioned that the Government had taken one more authority. It is not so because in 1989 this decision was taken on the 1st of April. After that there have been two more governments. Mr. Mathur's party was an equal partner and supporter of the Government till 1990. If they thought that the Government had taken more authority, they could have amended it. Since they brought in the Prasar Bharati Act also, it was not a very difficult proposition. So, the very fact that it stayed till 1993 shows that it is not a fact that the Government was taking one more authority.

So far as the muzzling of the independence of the press is concerned, I have mentioned that it is not a universal opinion. It may be his personal perception.

The third thing he mentioned was about a wage board. Wage board does not fall under the purview of the Ministry of I&B, but I shall certainly convey the feelings of the hon. Members to my colleague in the Labour Ministry.

He mentioned about foreign newspapers. As yet there is no decision. It is under consideration. I am sure the question of entry of foreign newspapers into India will have to be deliberated by the Government in its totality, and I am sure that Parliament will also have a chance to discuss it.

Then he mentioned about some of the papers being fundamentalists in nature. It is for the State Governments to enforce the law. There is nothing that the Central Government or the Ministry of I. & B. can do about this.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry) : Communal also.

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO : Mr. Murlidhar Bhandare also gave a very articulate and constructive suggestion. In fact, he wanted that there should be more teeth given to the Press Council of India. I have mentioned about that. He spoke about the ethos which newspapers should have, social cohesion, communal amity, national integration, balanced development and growth, and he said that we should not be utopan and idealist and that the Press Council of India should take cognizance of the type of writings and utterances in the papers. We shall definitely convey these to them.

About an enforceable code of conduct, the Press Council of India feels that it should be self-regulatory and that previous decisions of the Press Council of India should be guidelines rather than a formal code of conduct. But we shall certainly convey the views of the House to them.

Mr. Bhandare also mentioned about the control of newspapers by rich owners, which affects the freedom of the press. That again is a personal perception on which I would not like to join issue. This has been mentioned by many other

Members also, but we would like to stay clear off these comments.

Shankar Dayal Singhji is not present here. He also mentioned the same thing about editors and proprietors and centres for commercial and communal activity exerting pressure on the Government by industrial houses posing as journalists. Since we are committed to freedom of speech and expression and freedom of press, I would not like to comment on it.

As far as importance to news agencies is concerned, I have just mentioned about the help, support, financial as well as administrative support, being given by the Ministry of I. & B. and the P.I.B. to news agencies. Many Members have mentioned about the distorted journalism. This is something on which the combined wisdom of both the Houses will have to take notice. Madam, you yourselves have moved a half-an-hour discussion on the Hero Cup. It is the distorted journalism which has given a totally different idea to the countrymen. For about fifteen days this sort of journalism went on. I do hope on Thursday we shall be lucky to discuss it, because it is the question of sovereignty of the country which was at stake. It was not a question of a fistfull of dollars, which Doordarshan or AIR were trying to get. Therefore, this sort of distrotion can do untold harm not only to the young and impressionable youths who were crazy on seeing the cricket, but also it will have a very bad repercussion on the national and international arena and among the comity of nations.

Mr. Patil spoke about accomodation not being vacated and he drew a parallel between them and Members of Parliament. This is a vexed problem with the Ministry of Urban Development and the Ministry of I & B. We are trying to sort it out.

Shri Sukomal Sen wanted to know how it is specified. There are various norms by which specification of small and medium papers is being done. I had spoken about it then.

Mr. John Fernandes supported the Bill and said that there should be a blanket provision for it instead of coming for it from time to time. In fact, my Ministry had to wait for one year and two Ministers have come in between to get this simple amendment. Therefore, this blanket provision is necessary, because in the priority of subjects in this House we never know when the business will come up and in the bargain probably some small and medium newspapers will suffer. It is because we have not been able to take a decision.

He was also worried by speaking frankly and forcefully... (*Interruptions*) There is nothing which we can do here.

Dr. Sivaji also wanted more fool-proof and accurate verification mechanism. We shall definitely look into it. We do review period cally, but the views of the hon. Members will be of immense value to us, because it is on the verification of the circulation that the crux of classification would depend.

Then Mr. Jadhav also spoke about the mushroom growth of and blackmailing and blackmarketing by newspapers. He also spoke about taking away others' rights. We would not like to take away the rights of anyone. We do not like that the big newspapers survive at the cost of the small and medium newspapers. We have taken care to see that small and medium newspapers also survive and survive well in a competing environment, because they have to compete with other newspapers which have already got established roots. The other point made by Mr. Jadhav was about weeklies, monthlies as well as the financial constraints. We shall definitely take it up with the Finance Ministry. I am glad that the hon. Finance Minister is also here.

Shri Satya Prakash Malaviya also gave us a very good exposition on the role of the newspapers during the freedom struggle and how it can mould and mobilise public opinion for the betterment of the country.

Regarding the construction and reconstruction of the country too it has a role, being the Fouruth Estate.

He did mention about Justice Sarkaria's conference in September which we will definitely study the implications.

I am grateful to Mr. Giri Prasad for his erudite exposition. We shall definitely take his points into consideration and examine them.

I am grateful to Prof. Saurin Bhattacharya for his support to the Bill. He also gave his viewpoints.

I am extremely grateful to Mr. P. Upendra who is not here. He was my distinguished predecessor in this Ministry. He knows the working of the Ministry well. He has also asked that we should give more teeth to the organisation. Again this will require various implicatons. We would not like to tread into areas where we will be charged with trying to muzzle the press or curb the freedom of the press.

With these words, I once again thank every Member for participating in the debate on this Bill.

Madam, I commend this Bill for consideration of the House.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : The question is:

"That the Bill further to amend the Press Council Act, 1978, be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : We shall now take up clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill

Clause 1—Short title

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO : Madam, I move :

"That at page 1, line 7, *for* the figure "1992" the figure "1993" be *substituted.*"

The question was put and the motion was adopted

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : The question is :

"That Clause 1, as amended, stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 1, as amended, was added to the Bill.

Enacting Formula

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO : Madam, I move :

"That at page 1, line 5 *for* the word "Forty-third" the word "Forty-fourth" be *substituted.*"

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : The question is :

"That the Enacting Formula, as amended, stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

The Enacting Formula, as amended, was added to the Bill.

The Title was added to the Bill.

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO : Madam, I move :

That the Bill be passed.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : We will take up both the Bills together.

I. The Supreme Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 1993.

II. The High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 1993.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI H. R. BHARDWAJ) : Madam, I beg to move :

"That the Bill further to amend the Supreme Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Act, 1958, as passed by the Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration."

I also beg to move :

"That the Bill further to amend the High Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Act, 1954 and the Supreme Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Act, 1958, as passed by the Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration."

Both these Bills are being taken up together. The first Bill, that is, the Supreme Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 1993, seeks to provide that where a Judge of the Supreme Court does not avail himself of the official residence, he would be paid an allowance of Rs. 3,000 per month and this allowance would not be included in the computation of his income chargeable under the head "Salaries" under section 15 of the Income Tax Act, 1961. Normally all the Judges of the Supreme Court are provided with official residence befitting their status without payment of rent charges and, therefore, the question of payment of house rent allowance to Judges does not normally arise. However, a situation has arisen and may also arise in future when Judges do not avail of official residence. At times there is a delay in the vacation of the official residence by retired Judges and, therefore, the newly appointed Judges may have to go without suitable official residence for some period of time. The present Bill is intended to meet such situations. It may be pointed out that such a provision already exists in the case of the High Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Act, 1954 to the effect that the High Court Judges not availing of official residential accommodation will receive a house rent allowance of Rs. 2,500 per month which is exempt from income-tax. The amount of house rent allowance of Rs. 3,000 per month provided in the Bill is considered reasonable considering the status of the Supreme Court Judges. The Supreme Court's strength was increased with effect from 9th May, 1986 and, therefore, the contingency of payment of house rent allowance arose since then.

About the second Bill, that is, the High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 1993, the position prior to November, 1986, was that a Judge of the Supreme Court was entitled to leave travel concession for himself and the members of his family for visiting his permanent residence in his home State once in a year. In addition, he was also entitled to leave travel concession for himself and the members of his family for visiting any place in India once in a block of four years in lieu of LTC to home-town in that particular year. Similarly, a Judge of a High Court was entitled to LTC for visiting his permanent residence in his home State once in a block of two years and a Judge who had been transferred from one High Court to another was entitled for LTC to his permanent residence in his home State once every year. Besides, a Judge of the High Court was also entitled to LTC to anywhere in India once in a block of four years In lieu of the facility of LTC to home town. This concession was subject to income-tax exemption.

In order to improve the conditions of service of Judges, the Judges of High Courts and the Supreme Court were al-